

# Urban Culture *in* Medieval Wales

*Edited by*  
Helen Fulton



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# Introduction: The Impact of Urbanization in Medieval Wales

Helen Fulton

The concept of ‘urban culture’ in a country with as few large towns as medieval Wales may take some explanation – which is how this book came into being. In fact, there were thriving urban communities in Wales from the twelfth century and especially in the later Middle Ages, communities which, though relatively small, experienced a sense of common culture and identity through their linguistic, architectural, commercial, literary, religious and social practices.

The urban history of Wales has been documented in a number of landmark studies, beginning with E. A. Lewis, *The Mediaeval Boroughs of Snowdonia* (London, 1912). The collection edited by Ralph A. Griffiths, *The Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales* (Cardiff, 1978), remains the most useful account of the history of the borough towns of Wales and is cited by almost every contributor to this volume including Professor Griffiths himself. Maurice Beresford’s *New Towns of the Middle Ages* (London, 1967) and Ian Soulsby’s *The Towns of Medieval Wales* (Chichester, 1983) continue to be standard works of reference for the urban history of Wales, while more recent studies of individual towns, by Ralph A. Griffiths, Llinos B. Smith and Matthew F. Stevens among others, drill down further into the lives of Welsh townspeople using the evidence of wills, tax returns, county records and other urban documents. Standard histories of the counties of Wales are currently in production, with volumes for medieval Gwent, Glamorgan and Pembrokeshire already published, and these provide further material for the study of Welsh towns. In the recent past, major surveys of medieval British history have begun routinely to include relevant work on Wales, notably the *Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, edited by D. M. Palliser (Cambridge, 2000), and the *Companion to Britain in the Later Middle Ages*, edited by S. H. Rigby (Oxford, 2003). Finally, though not urban history in its strictest sense, the path-breaking work of R. R. Davies – particularly *Lordship and Society in the March of Wales, 1282–1400* (Oxford, 1978), *Conquest, Co-existence and Change: Wales 1063–1415* (Oxford, 1987) and *The Revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr* – has positioned us to understand the key role played by the Welsh towns in the political and social development of the country and its relations with England during the Middle Ages.

The history of urban development in medieval Wales is associated mainly with the Norman borough towns of south Wales and the English boroughs established during and immediately after the conquest of north Wales by Edward I in 1282. Maurice Beresford has traced the establishment of the new towns, pointing to their close connection with Edward’s military campaigns.<sup>1</sup>

Flint, Rhuddlan and Aberystwyth were founded in 1277 following Edward's war against Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in 1276–7, Flint as an entirely new settlement and Rhuddlan and Aberystwyth as new boroughs on or near the sites of existing villages. At the same time, new castles were built at the Norman townships of Ruthin and Builth.<sup>2</sup> Five castles and borough towns were built immediately after the fall of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in 1282, at Conwy, Caernarfon, Harlech, Cricieth and Bere, with the builders, carpenters and masons working, as R. R. Davies has said, 'at breakneck speed', under the supervision of a single master mason, Master James of St. Georges.<sup>3</sup> Beaumaris, together with the borough of Newborough, created to hold the displaced Welsh population from the village of Llan-faes on which Beaumaris was built, was begun in 1295 following the Welsh rebellion led by Madog ap Llywelyn.<sup>4</sup> Of these new towns in north Wales, only Caerwys, founded in 1290 on the site of a Welsh village, between Flint and Rhuddlan, seems to have been a primarily commercial rather than military settlement.<sup>5</sup> From the late thirteenth century, the borough towns planted by Edward I began to dominate the commercial activity of north Wales, previously conducted largely through the Norman towns of south Wales and the March, such as Cardiff, incorporated in 1120–37, Carmarthen, which received a grant of privileges from Henry I in 1109, and Montgomery, planted by Henry III as a military base in 1227.<sup>6</sup> Trading was also carried out in the few small native Welsh towns such as Nefyn, Pwllheli, Llan-faes and Tywyn. After the Edwardian conquest, the new royal boroughs stimulated further growth, as Marcher lords realized the financial advantages of commerce and began to incorporate towns within their lordships, such as Ruthin (founded by Reginald de Grey, justiciar of Chester, in 1282), Denbigh (founded by Henry de Lacy, earl of Lincoln, in 1285), Overton (founded by royal charter in 1292) and Holt (founded by John de Warenne, earl of Surrey, sometime after 1282).<sup>7</sup> Welsh lords were similarly keen to enjoy the financial benefits of towns and a number of new Welsh trading centres developed from the middle of the thirteenth century, such as Lampeter, founded by Rhys ap Maredudd in 1285, Welshpool, founded by Gruffydd ap Gwenwynwyn in 1241–5, and Llanidloes, founded by Owain de la Pole in 1280.<sup>8</sup>

From the late eleventh century onwards, many of the Norman towns in Wales claimed borough 'liberties', the charter of agreed privileges granted by the lord to the burgesses, which often came to include the collection of the annual 'farm', or levy of fees and tolls. In Carmarthen, for example, the burgesses were given the right to collect the farm from 1326–7: 'this meant that henceforward the routine obligation to collect rents, tolls and fines lay with the borough officers and the lord's financial interest was confined to receiving the lump sum or farm from the bailiffs; how and when the cash was actually collected was their business.'<sup>9</sup> Though charters varied, a common feature in both Welsh and English boroughs was the right of the burgesses to conduct retail trade in the town free of charge. Non-burgesses and 'foreigners' were

either excluded from trade altogether or were obliged to pay a toll.<sup>10</sup>

One of the most significant features of the English boroughs of Wales established after 1282 was that their charters specifically excluded Welshmen from becoming burgesses and trading freely in the towns. Not only did the Welsh have to pay tolls, as 'foreigners', but they were legally obliged to conduct their trade only within the towns, so that they could not avoid paying in order to trade.<sup>11</sup> The later thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in Wales saw the consequences of this policy gradually unfold, from a general relaxation of the prohibition in the early fourteenth century to a series of draconian anti-Welsh counter-measures in 1401 following the revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr.<sup>12</sup> In south Wales as well, various forms of institutionalized discrimination against the Welsh were practised in the predominantly English towns.<sup>13</sup>

Throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, despite their uneasy relationship with the English-dominated towns, the Welsh did manage to participate in urban life, both in their own towns and, to varying degrees, in the English towns of Wales and the borders. By the fifteenth century, Welsh court poets were composing praise poems to urban officials and churchmen, both English and Welsh, and were extolling the virtues of borough towns such as Oswestry as havens of consumer culture.<sup>14</sup> Of the roughly one hundred towns in medieval Wales, Cardiff was the largest, with approximately 2,000 inhabitants in the thirteenth century (compared with Oswestry, for example, on the English side of the March, with a population of about 3,000), while others such as Wiston and Painscastle were little more than villages. R. R. Davies commented that even the borough towns of medieval Wales would have seemed 'tiny and anaemic' compared to English towns, with Carmarthen, one of the larger boroughs in Wales in the late fourteenth century, containing fewer than 1,500 inhabitants.<sup>15</sup> About fifty towns throughout Wales had weekly markets, with larger towns such as Cardiff and Brecon holding twice-weekly markets.<sup>16</sup> Merchant guilds were established by the foundation charters of most of the borough towns of Wales (themselves largely English foundations) and these provided a platform for the ruling urban elites, with a small sector of mercantile burgesses elevated above those in the craft guilds. Though E. A. Lewis concluded that 'burgess-ship and gildship were apparently co-extensive in the smaller boroughs of North Wales',<sup>17</sup> there was clearly a sense in which some burgesses were more equal than others, and this, along with the other power relations operating in medieval Wales, gave the towns a particular significance as the location of social and class conflict.

Urban history and the history of urban culture are slightly different things, and it is with the latter that this book is primarily concerned, partly because urban culture in Wales has been less written about than its urban history. All the essays in this collection have something to say about the impact and consequences of urbanization in Wales, a process which had its own particular course in Wales and which resulted in some experiences which were unique to

Wales, such as the anti-Welsh legislation in the English borough towns, and some which were common to the rest of Britain, and indeed to many places in Europe, such as competing status groups and the development of urban ritual and popular entertainment. The relative lack of records relating to medieval Welsh towns is undoubtedly a handicap but, as the following essays show, the combination of surviving civic, religious and literary documents can give us a broad, and sometimes quite detailed, understanding of urban life in medieval Wales.

The ordering of the essays in this book represents an attempt to convey the richness and diversity of that life, and our evidence for it. The first five chapters provide some wide-ranging overviews of urban culture while the remainder focus on specific areas of urban activity. There is no strict chronological development, since many of the chapters range across a wide period of time, and I have deliberately juxtaposed historical and literary approaches to avoid an implicit privileging of either. If anything, the arrangement of the chapters mimics the way in which people might have experienced life in the towns of Wales, from both the inside and the outside, from a number of different perspectives, from institutional knowledge of the way things work and from small observations of particular phenomena.

The opening essay, by Ralph Griffiths (chapter 1), surveys some of the evidence for the nature and composition of urban populations in Wales, while the last essay, by Peter Fleming (chapter 12) opens Wales out to the neighbouring cities of England. Drawing on the evidence of tax returns to consider the demographics of Welsh inhabitants in the towns of south-west England in the sixteenth century, Fleming notes the importance of the Welsh diaspora in English cities other than London. From a variety of sources, Llinos Smith (chapter 2) constructs a rich account of the rhythms of urban life and occupations and argues for a certain degree of homogeneity of urban and rural society in Wales which helped to create urban communities that were more stable and less factional than their English counterparts. Smith does not, however, underestimate the significance of urban conflict in Welsh towns, the main topic of Spencer Dimmock's essay (chapter 5). Using an economic definition of social or class conflict as an expression of economic and political inequality, Dimmock provides a series of case studies to illustrate the nature of urban conflict between lords and burgesses, and within the urban hierarchies, during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Matthew Stevens (chapter 6) also takes economic inequality as his starting point for an analysis of Welsh-English relations in fourteenth-century Welsh towns with a particular emphasis on property-holding. His survey of tenants and taxpayers in the larger Welsh towns c.1300 demonstrates that urban cultures varied from one town to another, depending on the proportion of Welsh and English tenants. Deborah Youngs (chapter 7) contributes a valuable account of women in Welsh towns and their economic contribution through commercial activities and domestic service.



The layout of Welsh towns in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is reconstructed by Richard Suggett (chapter 3) on the basis of surviving buildings, historical accounts and maps such as those by John Leland and John Speed, and some architectural archaeology. His descriptions of markets, houses and high streets bring to life the physical reality of the Welsh towns, creating a context for my own exploration of urban ritual and festival (chapter 10), as well as for David Klausner's account of popular entertainment (chapter 11), based on the primary data which he sourced for his *Records of Early Drama: Wales* (London/Toronto, 2005). While I based my account on references in Welsh court poetry, Klausner uses the slim but suggestive evidence of civic and church records, noting for example that a play was performed, at least once and possibly on a regular basis, at the town hall in Swansea in the early seventeenth century. The spatial connections between the physical layout and buildings of the towns, and the kinds of social activities which could happen there, are striking.

Several of the essays, including my own, draw on the extensive body of Welsh court poetry composed before and after the Edwardian conquest. Dafydd Johnston (chapter 4) provides a survey of medieval Welsh poetry and its references to Welsh towns and urban life, demonstrating the importance of the towns and their resources to poets dependent on patronage from wealthy lords, burgesses and churchmen. He draws particular attention to the role of towns as centres of religious devotion, a theme developed in Catherine McKenna's essay (chapter 9) which focuses on a single Welsh poem to the Rood in the city of Chester. The poem effectively acts as a case study, both linguistic and cultural, for the richness of the Welsh devotional tradition and its association with urban churches and their icons. In this poem, argues McKenna, worship of the Rood, gilded and jewelled, signifies praise of the city itself, in all its richness, 'as a kind of heaven on earth'. Dylan Foster Evans (chapter 8) considers a range of poems which refer to castles and the ambivalent attitudes of poets and patrons to the English castles built on Welsh lands. He ends with a single poem, by Rhys Goch Eryri, which compares Penrhyn hall, a Welsh gentry-house, to Caernarfon castle, symbol of English oppression, and comes to an unexpected conclusion about the significance of this poem in the context of gentry patronage and the aftermath of the Glyn Dŵr rebellion.

The history of towns in medieval Wales and the urban culture which developed there have often been overlooked in social and political histories of Britain which turn more towards the large and economically powerful towns and cities of England. This collection of essays is concerned with manifestations of urban culture, rather than with the urban history of Wales or its individual towns, and this distinction is, I think, an important one. I hope it will be clear from this collection that urban life in medieval Wales, despite the relatively small size of the towns, was nevertheless as multifaceted, complex and worth studying as life in the larger English towns. For medieval urban and cultural

historians, there is much to be learnt from the Welsh experience of urbanization and its cultural and economic consequences.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>M. Beresford, *New Towns of the Middle Ages* (London, 1967), pp. 35–51.

<sup>2</sup>A. J. Taylor, *The Welsh Castles of Edward I* (London, 1986), pp. 1–37; A. D. Carr, *Medieval Wales* (London, 1995), p. 74.

<sup>3</sup>R. R. Davies, *Conquest, Co-existence and Change: Wales 1063–1415* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 358–9. Harlech, Cricieth and Bere were castles belonging to Welsh princes before 1282, while Conwy was built on the site of a Cistercian monastery (which was moved to Maenan with financial compensation) and Caernarfon displaced an existing Welsh town. See Beresford, *New Towns of the Middle Ages*, pp. 42–5.

<sup>4</sup>On the rebellion, see John Griffiths, ‘The revolt of Madog ap Llywelyn’, *Transactions of the Caernarvonshire Historical Society*, 16 (1955), 12–34; A. D. Carr, *Medieval Anglesey* (Llangefni, 1982), pp. 56–8.

<sup>5</sup>Beresford, *New Towns of the Middle Ages*, p. 48. See also Matthew Stevens’s useful distinction between towns of economic origin and towns of mixed military-economic origin, in chapter 6 of this book.

<sup>6</sup>On these towns, see Ian Soulsby, *The Towns of Medieval Wales* (Chichester, 1983), p. 61 and following; R. A. Griffiths (ed.), *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales* (Cardiff, 1978). Robert Weeks comments that ‘the establishment of a series of weekly markets and annual fairs across south Wales formed part of a calculated political strategy which marcher lords used in order to satisfy their aspirations in their newly emerging lordships’. See ‘Markets, trade and industry’, in Ralph A. Griffiths, Tony Hopkins and Ray Howell (eds), *The Gwent County History: vol. 2, The Age of the Marcher Lords, c. 1070–1536* (Cardiff, 2008), pp. 142–62, on p. 143.

<sup>7</sup>Soulsby, *Towns of Medieval Wales*.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 18–19. On the profits to be made from towns, Beresford notes that towns were considerably less profitable than manors: ‘a useful addition to manorial revenues, but not a high proportionate increase’ (*New Towns of the Middle Ages*, pp. 69–70).

<sup>9</sup>R. A. Griffiths, ‘Carmarthen’, in Griffiths (ed.), *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales*, pp. 131–63, on pp. 158–9.

<sup>10</sup>In England, not all market towns were boroughs, and not all boroughs had a charter of liberties, especially in the post-Conquest period. See Edward Miller and John Hatcher, *Medieval England: Towns, Commerce and Crafts 1086–1348* (London, 1995), pp. 279–90; Susan Reynolds, *An Introduction to the History of English Medieval Towns* (Oxford, 1977), pp. viii–x, 94–7.

<sup>11</sup>Davies, *Conquest, Co-existence and Change*, p. 373. In practice, many Welsh people traded in *patria*, that is, in rural areas outside the urban markets, to

avoid paying tolls.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 421–2; R. R. Davies, *The Revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr* (Oxford, 1995), p. 68; Soulsby, *Towns of Medieval Wales*, p. 24; R. A. Griffiths, ‘The study of the medieval Welsh borough’, in Griffiths (ed.), *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales*, pp. 1–17, on p. 13.

<sup>13</sup>R. R. Davies refers to a clause inserted into the town charters of Laugharne in 1386 and St Clears in 1393 to the effect that no burgess would be tried or convicted by Welshmen, only by other English burgesses (*Revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr*, p. 28).

<sup>14</sup>For example, the poems by Guto'r Glyn, Tudur Aled and Lewis Glyn Cothi, cited by Llinos B. Smith, ‘Oswestry’, in Griffiths (ed.), *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales*, pp. 219–42. See also Dafydd Johnston’s chapter in this book (chapter 4).

<sup>15</sup>Davies, *Revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr*, p. 25. John Schofield and Alan Vince comment, however, that ‘the importance of towns in the economic life of medieval Wales was out of proportion to their small size, because the society was underdeveloped in urban terms, and localised.’ *Medieval Towns* (London, 1994), pp. 19–20.

<sup>16</sup>Glanmor Williams, *Renewal and Reformation: Wales c. 1415–1642* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 68–70; Soulsby, *Towns of Medieval Wales*, p. 97.

<sup>17</sup>E. A. Lewis, *The Mediaeval Boroughs of Snowdonia* (London, 1912), p. 167. See also Spencer Dimmock’s discussion of the guild merchant in Welsh towns in chapter 5 of this book.

## Who Were the Townsfolk of Medieval Wales?

**Ralph A. Griffiths**

Who were the townsfolk of medieval Wales? This is a straightforwardly reasonable question. It is also an important one in explaining the nature of urbanization in a country that is partly mountainous and part lowland, with an exceptionally long and indented coastline, and at a time when it was open to external influences from all quarters. The nature of identity, as a social phenomenon, is much more difficult to grasp because individuals and groups, including towns, have several identities: what identifies one individual, group or collectivity (including a town) need not be the characteristics or qualities that identify a neighbour or a town nearby, let alone consistently across a region or country. This is certainly so of medieval Wales.

Age, gender, occupation, status and origin are among the characteristics that help to identify the townsfolk of any place and period; in relation to medieval Wales, arguably the most fascinating and formative of these is origin. As with towns elsewhere in medieval Europe, my reasonable question – who were the townsfolk of medieval Wales? – would elicit different answers if directed to the tenth century, before the age of rapid population growth and migration; to the decades around 1300, when that age was drawing to a close; and to the end of the Middle Ages, after a century and more of demographic contraction and social turbulence. At the same time, urban historians justifiably bemoan the patchiness of the surviving archives of Welsh towns, all of which were subject either to the crown or to lordships that might pass from one noble family to the next – some Welsh, most English – and not always peacefully, often with unfortunate effects on the survival of their records. The documentary remains of individual townsfolk are even more scant: their wills, the title deeds to their property, and, fewer still, merchants' and craftsmen's bills and accounts, even in the later Middle Ages and in literate households. Haverfordwest's surviving substantial collection of town deeds is a rarity, and only one lay cartulary – of the Fort family of Llanstephan – is known; however, both illustrate the integrated nature of the environment of town and countryside in which people lived.<sup>1</sup> The medieval centuries in Wales were an age of invasion and military conquest, migration and settlement, administrative particularity and social integration, features which gradually created a cosmopolitan urban society, albeit one whose universally small towns developed at different paces and whose communities might differ one from another in their origins, size and character. By 1300, there were almost a hundred of these small towns, serving

through their shops, crafts, markets and fairs a predominantly rural country, as was the case in most parts of contemporary Europe. In Wales, the fundamental distinctions are, first, between those towns of the south and east geographically facing the English lowlands and the Severn estuary, and, smaller in number, those in the more rugged north and west facing the seas towards Ireland and Scotland; these geographical imperatives never lost their relevance to Wales's pre-industrial urban development.<sup>2</sup> A second distinction is between those towns of the east and south that were established by relatively rapid conquest and attracted migrants from England, France and the Low Countries from about 1070 onwards (Cardiff, Pembroke and Oswestry spring to mind), and those of the north and west (such as Aberystwyth and Caernarfon) which were later and more deliberately organized, with further immigrants from England and from elsewhere in Wales, in the generation after 1275.<sup>3</sup> It is worth noting too that a few settlements with town-like functions seem to have existed before the Anglo-Norman and English conquests, in the vicinity of distinguished churches and peopled with residents of more local origin (such as at Bangor and Llandeilo).<sup>4</sup> And, finally, a small number of towns were fostered in the twelfth century and thereafter, especially near the west and north-west coasts, by Welsh princes for whom communication with Ireland was important; these were presumably populated with Welsh and probably some Irish folk, and might even be granted charters on the English model.<sup>5</sup> Such a variety of origins and of urban chronology from the eleventh century to the fourteenth could hardly fail to make the communities of Welsh towns diverse and cosmopolitan.

The study of the personal nomenclature of townsfolk is a treacherous field, but it does hint at certain social realities. William Doggerell, or William 'the Little Dog', was living in Cardiff by 1191, when the town was well established; but we do not know from what stock he came or where his forebears lived, or indeed whether he looked like a dog, behaved like a dog or sounded like a dog, yet his descriptive name suggests that he lived in an English-speaking environment.<sup>6</sup> Picot was a chaplain living in Newport by 1147, soon after the town had begun to grow. He sounds French or AngloFrench; though no one can be certain of his origins, he may have been attached to the Anglo-Norman abbey at Gloucester which had been gifted to St Woolos Church in Newport, and was now ministering to townsfolk who were bilingual in English and French.<sup>7</sup> Osbern, Thorkell and Leif were also prominent in early Cardiff, but did their Scandinavian names derive from Vikings or, indirectly, from Ireland or even from Normandy?<sup>8</sup> The first recorded burgess of Brecon bore the English name of Harding, 'the son of a herdsman' – so he might either have been a local man described by incoming English, or an Englishman, for Harding was a common name in the Bristol area.<sup>9</sup> Trade and the need for capital attracted a light scattering of Jews to towns like Cardigan and Chepstow, until their expulsion by Edward I overtook them in the last decade of the thirteenth century.<sup>10</sup> Otherwise, all these, their companions and descendants, continued to

live in eastern and southern towns and encouraged others to join them.

What of the Welsh folk among whom they lived? If, like many a conqueror, construction worker, castle builder and trader, the immigrants tended to be mostly younger males, they and their descendants are as likely to have married among the local populace as among their own kind, so that Welsh folk can be identified in these towns by the end of the twelfth century.<sup>11</sup> Suburban development outside town walls at Carmarthen or across the bridges over the rivers beside which inland towns developed, as at Brecon and Monmouth, was a sign of expansion during the age of population growth in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, presumably drawing in people from the countryside.<sup>12</sup> The licensed traders who lived especially in southern towns but had no burghage or property there – the so-called chensers and burgesses ‘of the wind and the street’ – were surely peasants from the countryside, often hundreds of them frequenting an individual town.<sup>13</sup> Before the end of the thirteenth century there were Welsh burgesses in Oswestry, including the brothers Cynwrig and Einion Foel (‘the bald’), seemingly a family trait, though Cynwrig’s son Richard may have had a head of hair because he preferred to be known as ‘the clerk’ and thereafter might have been mistaken for an Englishman by those who only knew his name.<sup>14</sup>

Such social realities challenge the once commonly held belief that practically all the inhabitants of medieval Welsh towns were immigrants from far afield and that they and their lords preferred to keep it that way. This belief mainly derives from the polymath scholar Gerald of Wales. Writing in the 1190s, he claimed that the Welsh ‘do not live in towns, villages or castles, but lead a solitary existence, deep in the woods’; ‘they pay no attention to commerce, shipping or industry’.<sup>15</sup> Gerald came from south-west Wales, not far from a clutch of coastal and lowland towns which by 1190 had Welsh-born residents alongside those of immigrant stock. He should have known better, not least because he himself by descent was part English and part Welsh; but then he had just returned from his famous journey with the archbishop of Canterbury to preach the crusade in Wales, a journey that took him to the far west and north where there were as yet few towns of the sort familiar to him in the south. Gerald, then, was myopic and partial in his view.

A century later, the comments of John Peckham, archbishop of Canterbury, have often been taken to confirm Gerald’s view about the solitariness and lack of urbanity of Welsh people: Peckham took a jaundiced view of their manners and social behaviour and thought that town life could civilize them.<sup>16</sup> But, then, he had spent most of his adult life as a scholar in bustling Paris before returning to Canterbury, and his recent return from a visitation of the Welsh Church, including the largest and furthest-flung dioceses of Bangor and St Davids (1284), doubtless confirmed his and Edward I’s inclination to reform society by developing some towns alongside the new castles in north and west Wales comparable to those which both of them saw in the east and south –

though few of these newish towns, it has to be said, developed on utterly pristine sites. Even at Caernarfon an urban settlement of Welsh folk seems to have been encouraged by the princes of Gwynedd well before King Edward began his great castle and issued a charter (1284) for the adjacent borough. Despite Edward I's ordinance that 'Welshmen were nominally forbidden to dwell or hold tenements within the liberties of the English boroughs', these northern towns had Welsh inhabitants as well as pioneer immigrants from England (and sometimes from elsewhere too) from the outset: how indeed could they survive without both?<sup>17</sup> Before the end of the thirteenth century, William of Doncaster (in Yorkshire) was a merchant of Chester trading to Anglesey; he soon became a burgess of Beaumaris and by 1312 was even mayor of Flint.<sup>18</sup> Among the earliest residents of Harlech were a Savoyard, Adam Beynard, whose descendants stayed, a number of English from Cheshire and the marchland, and also soon afterwards Henry of Brecon ('Breghekeynok') from south Wales; and when the town received its charter in 1325, the mayor was a Welshman, Hywel Goch.<sup>19</sup>

The comments of observers are, of course, only as reliable as their experience and knowledge can make them, as the cases of Gerald of Wales and Archbishop Peckham indicate. The same might be said, fifty years on, of the monkish chronicler, Ranulf Higden, who wrote about 1340 from the vantage point of Chester. St Werburg's abbey and the town of Chester regularly encountered people from the Severn and Dee valleys, the north Wales coast and from across the mountains as far as Harlech; Ranulf observed how in his day they were beginning to adopt English lifestyles, living in towns and tilling their gardens and fields.<sup>20</sup> By this stage, the size of the urban population of Wales was already past its peak and in the decades that followed would noticeably decline; yet that had the effect in some towns of attracting new immigrants, Welsh and English, to buy vacant properties and consolidate holdings. This was a process not without its tensions, which played a part in the revolt led by Owain Glyn Dŵr at the beginning of the fifteenth century. Nevertheless, another Chester monk, writing this time about 1430, felt it apposite to repeat Ranulf's observation and to add, tellingly, that these anglicized Welsh townsmen sought to 'accumulate riches and they feared losses', in other words that resentments within town communities were tempered by individual opportunity and the processes of social integration – and all within two decades of the revolt's end.<sup>21</sup>

Some Welsh towns admittedly withered almost to extinction in the century and a half after the Black Death. Others that prospered – and these were in all parts of a country of numerous lordships requiring administrative headquarters and the commercial paraphernalia that went with them – shed their earlier character as predominantly immigrant communities; yet in some places, such as the Edwardian boroughs of the north, those of immigrant origins or descent continued to express a rooted urban-rural dichotomy in the rhetoric of English

and Welsh, especially at times of social tension.<sup>22</sup> On a personal level, the use of Welsh and English aliases and Welsh surnames – even the adoption of Welsh patronymics by the descendants of immigrants – allowed individuals to find a versatile identity acceptable in what were hybrid and outgoing communities. By the end of the fourteenth century, John Owen of Kidwelly and his son were as much merchants of international standing as were Thomas Rede of Carmarthen and Bristol and his son, pursuing interests as broad as those of the Bolde family of Conwy and Lancashire. Whatever were the declared formal intentions of kings and lords, ‘the English burgesses of the English borough towns’ lived in a cosmopolitan environment well before this professed ideal of burgess-ship was formally abandoned by 1500.<sup>23</sup>

In the fifteenth century, Welsh poets, who perambulated much of the country at large, often spoke admiringly of certain Welsh towns. Early in the century, Sion Cent, who is associated with the southern marchland, commended the busy-ness of Brecon, though its residents of hybrid descent put up stout resistance against Owain Glyn Dŵr.<sup>24</sup> Towards the end of the century, Gruffudd ap Dafydd ap Hywel, a Caernarfonshire poet, liked to visit Harlech, Edward I’s castellated port-town on the north-western edge of Wales; he compared it with Calais, England’s wool and cloth mart on the edge of north-west France, and he considered its bailiffs, who were mostly Welsh-born to judge by their names, to be ‘not inferior to men of York’ whom Gruffydd may have encountered.<sup>25</sup>

His contemporary, Guto’r Glyn (died c.1493), from central Wales, looked eastwards – and equally admiringly – to Oswestry as the ‘London of Owain’s country’, and the ‘best town as far as Rome’ where the women were sophisticated and Owain, in his latter years, could easily find the rich food and medicines he sought. Tudur Aled (died c.1525), from not too far away in Denbighshire, praised the officials, shopkeepers and trade of a town that was coming to rival Shrewsbury.<sup>26</sup> And Ieuan ap Huw Cae Llwyd (fl.1455– 1505), originally from north-west Wales, spent most of his later life in the south and went so far as to dub Brecon ‘the Constantinople of Wales’.<sup>27</sup> The poets esteemed the urban and commercial qualities of these quite different towns, Brecon, Harlech and Oswestry – different in their histories and in their residents’ origins and attitudes. If esteem turned to flattery as the poets grasped for extravagant comparitors – Calais, London, Rome, even Constantinople – it was the perceived cosmopolitan reputation of these small towns that the poets sought to convey.

The Franciscan friary at Carmarthen became the last resting place of a few of these poets, their bodies interred beside those of both country gentry and townfolk of immigrant ancestry. In southern churches were placed tombs and effigies often carved from Somerset stone; while by the midfourteenth century, some town churches in the north were housing the tombs of leading Welsh families.<sup>28</sup> When Lancaster herald visited south Wales in 1531, he observed the



arms of well-to-do families of both Welsh and immigrant descent in the friaries of Carmarthen, Cardiff and Brecon and in Tenby's church; they may not always have been buried there but they were evidently regarded as committed patrons of these urban churches.<sup>29</sup> Religious relics attracted pilgrims to town churches from far afield, like the famous eternal taper in St Mary's priory, Cardigan, a cell of Chertsey abbey in the Thames valley.<sup>30</sup> And so the circumstances whereby colonization was overlaid and replaced by social integration may be multiplied.

Welsh towns, in sum, experienced a social and cultural reorientation in the later Middle Ages. The causes included the ending of military conquest early in the fourteenth century and of periodic revolts by the early fifteenth, and a severe demographic contraction that both hindered commercial activity in some centres and yet encouraged the land market in others. Neither the chronology nor the substance of these adjustments was sufficiently uniform to provide an all-embracing Welsh urban identity. When it is possible to identify at least those wealthy enough to be taxpayers in the 1540s, it is evident that some towns had become little more than country villages serving a localized market where once, like Cricieth, they had also supported a major castle; even Caernarfon, which in 1300 had a decidedly English air, by 1500 was increasingly dominated by a Welsh elite while still maintaining its role as a significant port and seat of government. Others, like Aberystwyth and Cardigan, retained their importance while being overwhelmingly peopled by Welsh residents, to judge by their names; and the southern and eastern boroughs, most notably, maintained wide-ranging relationships that were reflected in the make-up of their urban populations, of Welsh, English, Irish and even continental extraction.<sup>31</sup> Such diversity is a further factor that helps to explain why, by the 1530s, the first redrawing of England's frontiers for centuries – the so-called union with Wales – could be achieved peacefully and with remarkable durability.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>For an exception of a later medieval Welsh town with an extensive surviving archive, see M. F. Stevens, *Urban Assimilation in post-Conquest Wales: Ethnicity, Gender and Economy in Ruthin, 1282–1348* (Cardiff, 2010). See also R. A. Griffiths, 'The cartulary and muniments of the Fort family of Llanstephan', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 24, 3 (1971), 311–84, reprinted in idem, *Conquerors and Conquered in Medieval Wales* (Stroud/New York, 1994), pp. 193–253.

<sup>2</sup>A recent survey is R. A. Griffiths, 'Wales and the Marches', in D. M. Palliser (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, vol. I. 600–1540 (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 681–737, with a map illustrating the influence of the physical landscape, p. 682.

<sup>3</sup>For historians' ideas of later 'planted' or planned towns, see most recently,

K. D. Lilley, 'The landscapes of Edward's new towns: their planning and design', in D. M. Williams and J. R. Kenyon (eds), *The Impact of the Edwardian Castles in Wales* (Oxford and Oakville CT, 2010), pp. 99–113.

<sup>4</sup>See, for example, R. A. Griffiths, 'A tale of two towns: Llandeilo Fawr and Dinefwr in the Middle Ages', in H. James (ed.), *Sir Gâr: Studies in Carmarthenshire History* (Carmarthen, 1991), pp. 205–26.

<sup>5</sup>Ll. B. Smith, 'Towns and trade', in J. B. and Ll. B. Smith (eds), *History of Merioneth*, vol. II: *The Middle Ages* (Cardiff, 2001), pp. 205–26. See H. Pryce (ed.), *The Acts of Welsh Rulers, 1120–1283* (Cardiff, 2005), p. 57, no. 593, for charters of Welsh princes to Llan-faes and Welshpool in the thirteenth century.

<sup>6</sup>D. G. Walker, 'Cardiff', in R. A. Griffiths (ed.), *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales* (Cardiff, 1978), p. 117.

<sup>7</sup>R. B. Patterson (ed.), *Earldom of Gloucester Charters* (Oxford, 1973), no. 162 (1122/47); W. H. Hart (ed.), *Historia et Cartularium Monasterii Sancti Petri Gloucestriae*, 2 vols (Rolls Series, 1863–67), vol. II, p. 48. For the link between Newport's church and Gloucester's abbey, see A. C. Reeves, 'Newport', in Griffiths, *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales*, pp. 189–91, and D. Welander, *The History, Art and Architecture of Gloucester Cathedral* (Stroud, 1991), p. 89.

<sup>8</sup>Walker, 'Cardiff', pp. 113–14; P. H. Reaney, *The Origin of English Surnames* (London, 1967), pp. 123–6.

<sup>9</sup>R. R. Davies, 'Brecon', in Griffiths, *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales*, p. 67 (at the beginning of the twelfth century); *Medieval English Dictionary*, s.n. For Robert fitz Harding, a prominent Bristol merchant a little later, see D. G. Walker, *Bristol in the Early Middle Ages* (Bristol, 1971), pp. 20–21.

<sup>10</sup>R. A. Griffiths, 'The making of medieval Cardigan', *Ceredigion: Journal of the Cardiganshire Antiquarian Society*, 11, 2 (1990), reprinted in idem, *Conquerors and Conquered in Medieval Wales*, p. 299, n. 47; p. 222 and n. 4. The charters granted by Edward I to boroughs in northern Wales specified that residence in these towns was prohibited to Jews, which suggests that they were present in other Welsh towns: see E. A. Lewis, *The Mediaeval Boroughs of Snowdonia* (London, 1912), p. 39.

<sup>11</sup>The evidence is clearest from the late thirteenth century onwards: R. I. Jack, 'Ruthin', in Griffiths, *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales*, p. 251; A. J. Taylor, 'The earliest burgesses of Flint and Rhuddlan', *Flintshire Historical Society Journal*, 27 (1975–6), 152–60.

<sup>12</sup>R. A. Griffiths, 'Carmarthen', in idem, *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales*, p. 149; Davies, 'Brecon', p. 55. The suburb in Monmouth, south of the Monnow Bridge, was known as Overmonnow: K. E. Kissack, *Mediaeval Monmouth* (Monmouth, 1974), p. 33.

<sup>13</sup>R. Weeks, 'Making sense of the *censarii*: licensed traders in medieval sources', *The Local Historian*, 34, 2 (2004), 113–17.

<sup>14</sup>Ll. B. Smith, 'Oswestry', in Griffiths, *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales*, p. 233 and n. 61.

<sup>15</sup>Both references are translated from Gerald's *Descriptio Cambriae*. See L. Thorpe (trans.), *Gerald of Wales: The Journey Through Wales/Description of Wales*, (London, 1978), p. 251 and p. 233.

<sup>16</sup>C. T. Martin (ed.), *Registrum Epistolarum Johannis Peckham*, 3 vols (Roll Series, 1882–4), vol. III, pp. 776–7, with commentary in G. Williams, *The Welsh Church from Conquest to Reformation*, 2nd edn (Cardiff, 1976), pp. 35–8.

<sup>17</sup>Lewis, *Mediaeval Boroughs of Snowdonia*, pp. 41–2. This classic work should be supplemented by the nuanced study by K. Williams-Jones, 'Caernarvon', in Griffiths, *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales*, pp. 72–101.

<sup>18</sup>A. D. Carr, *Medieval Anglesey* (Llangefni, 1982), p. 113.

<sup>19</sup>Smith, 'Towns and trade', pp. 236, n. 55, pp. 239–40, p. 241, n. 78.

<sup>20</sup>Quoted in R. R. Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence and Change: Wales, 1063–1415* (Oxford and Cardiff, 1987), p. 424.

<sup>21</sup>A. Wall (ed. and trans.), *Handbook to the Maude Roll* (Auckland, 1919), n. p., a new edition of which is in preparation. For a later arrival from the English borderland, see R. A. Griffiths, 'An immigrant elite in the later Middle Ages: locating the de Parys family in north Wales and Chester', *Welsh History Review*, 25 (2011), 168–200.

<sup>22</sup>Lewis, *Mediaeval Boroughs of Snowdonia*, pp. 254–69.

<sup>23</sup>See W. Rees (ed.), *Calendar of Ancient Petitions Relating to Wales* (Cardiff, 1975), pp. 439–40 (c.1343/76), for the phrase in relation to north Wales. And see R. A. Griffiths, *The Principality of Wales in the Later Middle Ages; South Wales, 1272–1536* (Cardiff, 1972), p. 322 (for John Owain and his son); Griffiths, 'Carmarthen', pp. 156–7 (for the Redes); and T. Jones Pierce, *Medieval Welsh Society*, ed. J. B. Smith (Cardiff, 1972), pp. 95–228 (for the Boldes).

<sup>24</sup>'Bwrdeisiaid, berw disathr,/ Cyffredin dylwyth, llwyth llathr', quoted in Davies, 'Brecon', pp. 63–4.

<sup>25</sup>Smith, 'Towns and trade', pp. 242, 620–2; the poem, which begins 'Herwydd adail hardd ydwyd', is preserved in a number of manuscripts in the National Library of Wales.

<sup>26</sup>J. Ll. Williams and I. Williams (eds), *Gwaith Guto'r Glyn* (Cardiff, 1939), no. 49, translated in J. P. Clancy, *Medieval Welsh Poems* (Dublin, 2003), pp. 314–15; T. Gwynn Jones (ed.), *Gwaith Tudur Aled*, 2 vols (Cardiff, 1926), vol. I, no. 45.

<sup>27</sup>L. Harries (ed.), *Gwaith Huw Cae Llwyd ac Eraill* (Cardiff, 1953), no. 51. See H. Fulton, 'The *encomium urbis* in medieval Welsh poetry', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 26 (2006), 54–72, a reference I owe to Professor Fulton.

<sup>28</sup>Griffiths, 'Carmarthen', pp. 159, 161–2; C. A. Gresham, *Medieval Stone Carving in North Wales* (Cardiff, 1968), passim (with a list in Appendix A).

<sup>29</sup>M. P. Siddons (ed.), *Visitations by the Heralds in Wales* (Harleian Society, London, 1996), pp. 22–103 passim.

<sup>30</sup>Griffiths, 'The making of medieval Cardigan', 123–4.

<sup>31</sup>Williams-Jones, 'Caernarvon', 101; The National Archives, E179/210/67, 68 (34–5 Henry VIII).

## In Search of an Urban Identity: Aspects of Urban Society in Late Medieval Wales

**Llinos B. Smith**

Some time after 1536 a memorial brass was placed in the north wall of the chancel of the church of SS Mary and Nicholas in the town of Beaumaris to commemorate the life of Richard Bulkeley and that of Elizabeth, his wife, ‘the most faithful guardian of their holy marriage’. Bare-headed and dressed in a long fur-trimmed gown, Richard is described as a ‘prudent merchant of this little town’ (*huius mercator providus oppiduli*) as he and his wife, and behind them a daughter and two of their sons, are depicted, kneeling and facing each other in prayer.<sup>1</sup>

The precise identity of this Richard Bulkeley is uncertain, save that his name locates him within one of the most distinguished and wealthy landed families of Anglesey society. But fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Beaumaris was indeed a small town of perhaps no more than five hundred souls. Founded by Edward I to secure the island and dominated by its castle, the town had burgeoned into a thriving, if still modest, centre of trade and maritime commerce in the course of the late Middle Ages. Its merchants, of whom Richard Bulkeley was undoubtedly representative, included among them some of the highest taxpayers of the whole of the three shires of north Wales and, together with the lawyers of Caernarfon and Conwy’s gentlemen residents, the Beaumaris merchants were of sufficient distinction by the reign of Elizabeth to earn the plaudits of Sir John Wynn of Gwydir. Resplendent in death in his robes and proud of his status as merchant, Richard Bulkeley invites us to enter the world of the townsmen and townswomen of late medieval Wales. In what ways, if at all, was the experience of living in an urban environment markedly different from a life led in a rural community? In short, was there a self-conscious and clearly articulated urban identity in late-medieval Wales?

By the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries towns and their inhabitants had assumed a far more prominent position in the literature of the period, mainly in the works of the poets, than they had done so in earlier times. Habitues of the towns as many of the poets undoubtedly were, their allusions to urban life were in part drawn from their own experiences, prejudices and observations of life in the towns, in part from idealized notions of what a town ought to be and in part from an awareness, however it may have been attained, of the great European cities and towns which they may not always have seen.<sup>2</sup> For the poets, the contrasts of urbanity and rusticity were truisms which underpinned

much of their consciousness of the towns. In the poetic lexicon, *diwladaidd* or *dinesig* (courteous, urbane) were terms of approbation, just as (albeit more rarely) *bwrdeisiaidd* (burgess-like) or *bwrdeisiaeth* (burgess-hood) distinguished some of the characteristics of townspeople from those of countrydwellers.<sup>3</sup> Not only were towns such as Newtown, Newborough, Brecon or Oswestry the subjects of adulatory, even extravagant, verse, but townsmen like Hywel Prains, a merchant of Cowbridge, or John Tyrel of Cardiff were deemed worthy of praise in terms equal to the native *uchelwyr*, the former even compared in his prowess and acumen in business with renowned English merchants like William Canynges of Bristol or Richard Whittington of London.<sup>4</sup> Towns buzzed with life, with spectacles, entertainments and taverns; in them a diversity of sorts and conditions of people – burgesses, craftsmen, labourers and servants – were to be found; town streets, and the shops and workshops within them, provided the rich foodstuffs – the spices, the meats, the exotic fruits and the wheaten bread as well as the pewter and plate – which graced the tables of town residents. Towns rang with the music of organs, the sounds of bells and of clocks, the chantings of churchmen and the recitations of scholars in their schools.<sup>5</sup> The transactional vocabulary of commerce and market – *gildio*, *maelier*, *marsiaidwr*, *hwcrestres* and *forstal* among them – were, by the fourteenth century, well known to the poets, and in their search for arresting images and metaphors features normally connected with townscapes, like paved streets (*paement*) and pillory, found their place.<sup>6</sup>

Yet towns could also elicit an ambivalent, even contradictory, response. Towns could be likened to the order of paradise (*bwrdeistref baradwysdrefn*), but they could also convey the fires of hell. Towns might be bastions of Englishness, but they might also be havens where Welshmen were welcomed, and discrimination (*anfrait*) unknown. Townswomen could be elegant, courteous and refined, arrayed in damask and diamonds, but they were also lascivious and scabrous, the source of sin and disease. Towns were harmonious societies of concord and probity (*cywirdeb*), but they were also arenas of guile and deceit. The town and the country might be environments between which a conscious and deliberate choice should be made, but they also offered solace and comfort to man in his old age after a youth spent in the hills and the greenwood. Clearly, by the early sixteenth century, if not earlier, a literary image, indeed, a literary construct of towns and their societies had emerged, even if its inconsistencies and incompatibilities were also apparent.<sup>7</sup> Yet towns and their societies have often occupied an uneasy position in the grand narratives of economic and social development. Indeed, the legitimacy of the town as a generic social object amenable to and deserving of separate analysis has often been questioned by the practitioners of several disciplines working in very different chronologies.<sup>8</sup> For the medieval economic historian, the economies of town and country, for good or for ill, were not opposing but complementary forces and, in any analysis of economic development, towns, it

is claimed, 'pose no special problem' except in terms of a theoretical construct that 'polarizes' country and town.<sup>9</sup> For the historian of ideas and solidarities, the ideology of community, once perceived as a specifically urban prerogative, is now better understood in the context of the collective instincts of townsfolk and country dwellers alike, while fellowships, like the fraternity, far from being quintessentially urban in character, were rooted in the 'drive to association' which transcended any rural and urban divide.<sup>10</sup> In the world of religious culture, the dichotomy of rural and urban likewise, so it is argued, impairs rather than enhances our understanding of the mentalities of the past, and the hierarchies of town and country, especially those of the social elites, cannot and should not be treated as separate worlds between which a choice had to be made.<sup>11</sup> The regulation of markets, and the outrage expressed by urban societies when their injunctions were breached, do not readily translate into a distinctive borough moral economy, while the moral compass of townspeople was not always as distant from the values of countrymen as the latter's criticisms of the deceit and guile apparently endemic in urban life would seem to suggest. Viewed in this light, the search for an urban identity seems at best a distraction and at worse an irrelevance, and energies might be better diverted towards a quest for the essential resemblances of the *tissus urbains* and *espaces rurales* of medieval society.<sup>12</sup>

Many of the reservations voiced by historians of medieval urban societies in general would certainly be shared by investigators of the Welsh town, and for a number of very good reasons. In the first place, the great majority of towns in Wales were secular foundations, royal or seigniorial, and formed units of finance and justice within lordships which embraced urban and rural communities alike. In no sense were Welsh towns, to use a celebrated and much-quoted phrase, 'non-feudal islands in a feudal sea'; rather they were peninsulas firmly attached to the mainland of secular authority. Several towns in the late Middle Ages, even if their lords were, by then, frequently absent in person, bore visible, unequivocal manifestations of his watchful regard. The arms of the Stafford lords of Newport were emblazoned over the town's central gate; royal targes embellished the king's castle of Rhuddlan, while the effigy of Henry de Lacy, 'in his long stately robes', glowered from the gatehouse of the castle of Denbigh.<sup>13</sup> Town seals might bear the imprint of seigniorial proprietorship, as did that of Brecon which was composed of the arms of its Braose and Bohun lords, while castle baileys gave shelter to several infant urban communities and lent their names to urban thoroughfares and lanes. Nor was the town church entirely immune from the iconography of secular power, for the Mortimer shields which studded, at regular intervals, the outer wall of the church of Presteigne, or the tiles in St Mary's at Monmouth, which bore the arms of Mary de Bohun, proclaimed unambiguously the status and role of many towns within the landed estates of the lords of the March.<sup>14</sup> Towns were, indeed, the linchpins of seigniorial regimes, whose functionaries, even if they



were not always resident in the towns, were frequently property owners there and stakeholders in the burgess community.

Yet the interactions of seigniorial regimes and urban communities were not always as cordial and mutually supportive as might be supposed. On the one hand, seigniorial charters and their confirmations, allowing for differences of detail and chronology, granted important immunities; and elements of self-government, chiefly in the form of a separate court and the right to exclude royal or seigniorial officials, the farm of the borough, a common seal and the right to own property. Protectionist clauses which excluded Welshmen from the status of burgess or from purchasing property in the towns can likewise be identified in many of the charters issued from the late thirteenth century onwards.<sup>15</sup> Burgesses, for their part, responded, especially at periods of crises, by offering, among other indicia of support, cash loans for the military needs of their lords or engaged in person in the defence of their towns.<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, there was no necessary correlation between size, economic prosperity and municipal freedom, and the reins of seigniorial authority might be tightly held even in the most prosperous of Welsh towns. Town courts might be held in the presence of the lord's steward or his lieutenant as was the case throughout the period at Ruthin, where newly made burgesses, on entering the liberty of the town, were required to undertake to keep 'all counsels and secrets of the lord and reveal them to no one', or at Chepstow, where despite the considerable rights of self-government granted in a charter of 1524, the town court remained firmly in the grip of its lord.<sup>17</sup> In the same way, like the rural communities, towns might be exposed to the financial demands of their lords by the requirement to render subsidies and *mises*, such as those expected at the 'first coming' of lords into their lordships or for the marriages of their daughters.<sup>18</sup>

Even when a measure of urban self-government was won by the urban community, its achievement should not always be viewed as a smooth and steady progression from seigniorial control to civic freedom. Brecon's lord suspended the liberties of the town in 1340, the first of no fewer than three known occasions when the town's privileges were arrogated, and appointed his own bailiff to take charge of the town; so, too, at Oswestry, where, although two charters were granted between 1399 and 1407, the one bestowed by King Richard II who held the vast Arundel domains in his grasp, the other by Thomas Arundel, following his recovery of his patrimonial estates, it is the second and later charter which is the more strident in its punctilious insistence on the lord's rights in the governance of the town.<sup>19</sup> Townspeople were often subjected to the same tensions between them and their lords as were the rural communities in their often spectacular and better known confrontations with capricious seigniorial authority. The charter granted by William de Braose to Swansea in 1306, for example, should be viewed in the context of a most comprehensive concession of liberties forced from the lord by the English and Welsh of the English county of Gower while, slightly earlier at Haverfordwest,



the acts of the burgesses in defence of their right to be tried in their town court elicited a most ruthless seigniorial reaction. Likewise, in the mid-fourteenth century, the burgesses of Rhuddlan, no less oppressed than the men of the *cantref* of Englefield by the rule of the Black Prince and his adjutants, maintained that the castle constable had threatened to turn some of them out of their houses by the neck and broken the arms and legs of one of their number and left him for dead. Welsh towns were certainly recipients of the lord's favours and blandishments. But the harsh, unforgiving face of seigniorial authority displayed towards urban no less than to rural communities on occasion, was also real enough.<sup>20</sup>

If the palpable powers of royal and seigniorial regimes often served to bind town and country firmly together, so also did the urban environment exude an unmistakably countrified air. Although size was not, of itself, an obstacle to the inculcation of an urban identity, even by the standards of medieval small towns, many Welsh urban settlements were exceptionally modest in extent, and the calendars and rhythms of the pastures and fields never far removed from the townspeople's daily experience.<sup>21</sup> Welsh towns were often generously enveloped within agrarian liberties of considerable size for, in a country where the memory of rebellion had by no means been extinguished, safeguarding the food and fuel supplies of a town was a matter of vital concern. Even the more substantial towns such as Ruthin, where some of the burgage holders were to provide for their lord the 'third ploughing' as service, or the smaller borough of Holt whose burgesses were exempt from travelling or labouring in sowing time outside the liberty, conformed, in some ways, to the image of a settlement that was agricultural in character. Agricultural workers occupied tenements in a number of towns, and open spaces and the paraphernalia of an agricultural life were apparent in the prevalence of barns, cowsheds, pinfolds, dovecotes and mills, gardens and orchards within urban precincts and the presence of agricultural tools such as flails, spades and winnowing fans among the chattels of townsmen. Towndwellers kept animals, grew crops and tended orchards and gardens within the towns and its liberties. Pigs and goats ran amok in poorly fenced curtilages and destroyed fruit trees and vegetable beds; sheep and draught animals trespassed in cornfields. Ordinances such as those of Caernarfon, which ordered the confiscation of pigs found wandering at large in the streets and lanes of the town, or those promulgated at Cowbridge which prohibited the milking of kine in the High Street within the town walls, confirm the impression that the rural routines and conventions were entirely relevant and familiar to the townspeople of the late Middle Ages.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, burgesses were often prominent as stockfarmers and graziers and as commercial producers of dairy products, such as cheese, so that the consequences of murrain or the erosion of rights in pastures and woodlands might be as devastating to the town-dweller's finances and economic well-being as they were to the fortunes of countryfolk.<sup>23</sup>

Most indicative of all of the integration of urban and rural society, and the difficulties encountered in inculcating a distinctively urban identity in those who lived in the towns, are the attributes and aspirations of town populations. Peasant immigrants, some drawn from contiguous rural townships, some from villages and communities at considerable distance, swelled the populations of towns, many preserving connections with, or at least cherishing the memory of, the village or parish where they were born.<sup>24</sup> The constant replenishment of towns by migrants from rural communities, it has often been stressed, reinforced the rural mentalities and rituals of the residents of the town. By contrast, town families often failed to establish long-standing dynasties, and where urban rentals of different dates have survived, or where a good series of property deeds can be consulted, the turnover of urban families is often, apparently, substantial.<sup>25</sup> Equally significant as an agent which helped to bind together town and country were the appetites of urban families to invest in landed endowments, and even to remove their domicile from the town. Although, in the early fourteenth century, the enjoyment of urban freedoms and liberties was normally contingent not only on property ownership but also on residence in a town, and repeated attempts might be made to ensure that towns should be manned by loyal, responsible and resident burgesses, the trend was unmistakably in the other direction. In the crown lands of the north, for example, Prince Edward in 1305 responded favourably to the request of a Beaumaris burgess that he should be allowed to hold lands and tenements in the town although not resident in person, and before long the burgesses of Rhuddlan were claiming the right to lease their burgages to whomsoever they wished, notwithstanding the charter which demanded their residence in their burgages to afforce (*efforciamendo*) the town and the castle.<sup>26</sup> The result was a process, whose lineaments may be traced in numerous surviving property deeds and in court rolls where they are available, whereby urban capitalists hastened to invest their fortunes in land. For some of the more prosperous among them, a transformation from town-dweller to country gentleman involved an abnegation of their urban identity and constituted a veritable *trahison de la bourgeoisie* in the history of many Welsh towns.<sup>27</sup> Conversely, by the end of the fifteenth century, if not earlier, families of substance in their rural localities were entering the political and social life of the towns, investing in urban property, recruiting townspeople into their retinues, building for themselves fine urban residences and choosing their final resting places within the precincts of town churches or in those of the mendicant orders.<sup>28</sup> Nor was a life spent in merchandizing and trade incompatible with the status of gentleman, and the merchant, too, as some of the poets proclaimed, was deserving of respect and of worship (*wrsib*). Moreover, the marriages of the sons and daughters of prominent urban and rural families should not be viewed so much as a merger of trade and gentility as a union between dynasties which, in many important respects, shared the same outlook and values.<sup>29</sup> The common

mentalities, at this social level, was a point fully appreciated by the poet Lewys Glyn Cothi who, in his eulogy to Nicholas Reed of Green Castle, presented with delicacy and refinement his patron's easy movement from the shire hall (*sir hal*) of Carmarthen to his mansion and acres outside the town, and, in his tribute to Hywel ap Goronwy, not only portrayed the squire's largesse at his home outside Wrexham but also his familiarity and ease with the life of the town.<sup>30</sup> At this social level, the apparent polarities of country and town which have so fascinated the modern historian may have held little relevance to those who regularly and successfully negotiated the boundaries between urban and rural society.

A number of other arguments may be offered in support of the notion of the essential homogeneity of urban and rural society. For one thing, despite strenuous efforts to set up extensive urban trading monopolies and, in many instances, to confine the commercial brewing of ale and the pursuit of specific trades to the towns, it is doubtful whether trading *in patria* was ever extinguished. The hidden trade of the period, accomplished in unofficial markets and fairs, at the congregations held regularly at designated meeting places on the borders of contiguous lordships, by private exchanges and bargains, or by pedlars, can be assumed to have formed a substantial element of the commerce of Wales as it has been shown to have been in many English localities.<sup>31</sup> It might also be suggested that feast-giving and the maintenance of hospitable habits, widely viewed as an obligation of status, may have absorbed a not insignificant proportion of the surplus of rural localities and, indeed, the marked similarities of diet and material comfort between the households of prosperous *uchelwyr* and the foods associated with those of the towns should also be noted.<sup>32</sup> The occupational structures of town and country, likewise, frequently overlapped. The cloth industry had not retreated entirely from the towns and its urban presence is represented by apparatus such as tenters, together with the occupations of weaver, shearer and cardmaker, while cobblers, coopers, wrights, medical men, slaters, goldsmiths and many other callings and trades were practised in rural localities as well as in towns. The common prostitute, despite the difficulty of distinguishing between simple promiscuity and the exchange of sexual favours for payment, was as ubiquitous in the countryside as she was in the town.<sup>33</sup>

Nor were urban societies less socially stratified than those of the rural hinterlands in which they were set. Even the smallest town could exhibit disparities of wealth, status and occupational or family prestige, while in some towns, such as Oswestry or Carmarthen, a measure of social zoning can be observed, with the more prosperous townspeople congregating in the more select parts of the town.<sup>34</sup> There were burgesses and non-burgesses, and the burgess community itself was often divided between those who owned property and enjoyed the full privileges which pertained to their status and those who were allowed only the right to trade in a town.<sup>35</sup> Craft guilds, such as those that

had appeared in Cardiff, Ruthin or Haverfordwest, provided an outlet for occupational collectivities, while fraternities, such as those identified at Oswestry or Montgomery, although the evidence for their significance and function is slight, may likewise have brought together men and women in associations of townspeople who shared similar lifestyles and values.<sup>36</sup>

What is more difficult to identify in the Welsh towns, in contrast with many English towns of the period, is the development of strong sectional interests and rivalries within town populations. Welsh towns were not normally honeycombed with competing franchises, although the separate jurisdictions exercised by ecclesiastical institutions over their tenants can be found at Kidwelly, Monmouth and Ruthin, and most spectacularly at Carmarthen, where, for many years, there were in effect two rival urban communities, the one under royal control, the other under that of the prior.<sup>37</sup> Periodic purges of Welshmen are certainly a well-documented feature in a number of towns; but these were not always generated by pressures from within the burghess community, although the burgesses of the 'English towns of North Wales' were, on many occasions, able to lobby in defence of their privileges and position.<sup>38</sup> But where burghess lists have been preserved, or where the participants in the government of a town can be identified, such as at Ruthin, a relatively open community comprising of mercers, victuallers, craftsmen and artisans is revealed, although in other towns a more pronounced mercantile or gentry dominance has been identified.<sup>39</sup> However, in the present state of our knowledge, conflicts within urban society, of which there were many, were engendered mainly by individual or familial animosities, and, although Welsh towns were not social utopias, neither were they arenas of pronounced social tensions or rigid class interests.

So far, the emphasis of this discussion has been on the common elements which bound together town and country. Yet to stress the shared mental outlook of townsfolk and countryfolk is not to deny the urban environment an important measure of distinctiveness and to townspeople the potential to foster an urban identity. We may begin with the ethnic component in urban identity, an element which has loomed large, even if it has not dominated modern investigations of the medieval Welsh town. While we would exaggerate to describe any urban society in Wales as cosmopolitan in character, many were more ethnically diverse than might be imagined. Castlebuilders and craftsmen, drawn from Savoy, Gascony and Champagne, some of whom stayed to people the encompassing boroughs, injected a French flavour into the castle-towns of the conquest, and there is evidence from both Conwy and Swansea that, in the early fourteenth century, French was spoken by some of their residents. Names such as those of Michael and Felicia de Picardy, who took up residence in late-fourteenth-century Ruthin, or the small group of French aliens who were living at Monmouth in the early sixteenth century, reveal that the French element, although small, was not insignificant, while the epithet *duchesman*, documented

in towns such as Denbigh, Ruthin and Haverfordwest, suggests the ultimate continental origin of some urban families. More numerous were those men and women bearing the soubriquet *de Hibernia* or Irish, even though the great influx of Irishmen, speaking a 'crude English tongue', was yet to be witnessed.<sup>40</sup> But it is the Englishness of many Welsh towns that impressed contemporary observers, as it has predominated in modern portrayals of Welsh urban society, and that for very good reason. Founded at a time when the consciousness of English identity had sharpened, and populated by numerous colonists of English nationality, many of the castle-boroughs of north Wales indeed exuded a sense of being 'English boroughs in Wales', as they would shortly be described. Prompted by the traumatic experiences of rebellion, royal and seigniorial regimes acted for the defence of their towns, on many occasions, by ensuring by charter, by ordinance and by punitive action that town property and the status of burgess should be the preserve of the English who, for their part, often railed at the 'malice and enmity' or 'haughtiness' of the Welsh.<sup>41</sup> Even at the end of the fifteenth century, when the worst excesses of ethnic animosities had abated, the charter granted to Llandovery explicitly prohibited the sale of borough property to the Welsh, while at Ruthin, Welshmen, although they were admitted as burgesses, were granted their status notwithstanding that they were 'Welshmen by blood'.<sup>42</sup> Small wonder that for Dafydd ap Gwilym mid-fourteenth-century Carmarthen was a *saesnecref*, and 'burgess' and 'Englishman' almost interchangeable terms to many fifteenth-century poets.<sup>43</sup> Such perceptions, however, hardly corresponded to the social realities of the towns which are better regarded not only as foci of tensions between distinctive nations and peoples but also as fulcrums in which the rich regional cultures and dialects of the separate societies of England and Wales intermingled and merged.

A second – and perhaps the most obvious – manifestation of an urban identity was the topography of a town and its physical impact in the landscape in which it was set. Indeed, in a countryside comprised largely of dispersed homesteads and farms and where, with important exceptions, there were few sizeable villages of the kind which have caused difficulties in distinguishing between large rural settlements and small towns in England, the urban skyline of castle, walls, towers, churches, spires and gates must have presented a striking impression. Not that all the towns of the period were defended by masonry walls, and those that were often sported significant extra-mural settlements, as did Oswestry where, by the late-fourteenth century, the town's Beatrice Street had outgrown the protective carapace of the wall, or Haverfordwest where, by the 1470s, there were burgages beyond the town gate.<sup>44</sup> But several Welsh towns such as Conwy, Cowbridge or Tenby were defended by walls of quite spectacular size, while at Monmouth a fortified bridge, complete with portcullis, machicolations and parapets, guarded the approach to the walled town. Town walls were often a manifestation of a civic

identity, while town posterns and gates, locked at night, were not only an integral part of a town's scheme of defence but also constituted a visible, fiscal boundary which regulated the flow of goods and commodities between country and town.<sup>45</sup>

Even if no physical boundaries had been negotiated on entering a town, the traveller would have encountered an infrastructure of streets, lanes (*venellae*) and alleys punctuated by houses, shops, workshops and taverns, the latter, at least at Ruthin, marked out by its alestake. At Montgomery, the Cedewain and Ceri gates of the town would have led the visitor directly to the market, the commercial centre of most towns, although it is possible that shops, rather than stalls set up in broad streets or in marketplaces, also provided retail outlets in at least some of the Welsh towns.<sup>46</sup> But markets, often distinguished by a cross, were also a forum for entertainment and gatherings, such as the demonstration witnessed at the market cross of Denbigh in 1537.<sup>47</sup> The *judicialia* of secular authority – the tumbrel, pillory and thewe – were often located near the marketplace, which was also the locus where ecclesiastical discipline was imposed, as was frequently the case in the small towns of Knighton and Presteigne, where penitents were whipped around the marketplace, or at Ruthin, where at least one miscreant, who had worked on a holy day, was sentenced to ride his harrow around the market square of the town.<sup>48</sup> Town churches, too, often extended and embellished in the course of the fifteenth century, provided a physical landmark as well as a focus for the townsmen's devotions. In the larger towns such as Haverfordwest, where there were by the fifteenth century no fewer than three parish churches as well as those of the mendicant orders, or Brecon where churches and chapels were numerous, the ecclesiastical presence may have nurtured neighbourhood loyalties. But the majority of Welsh urban centres were single-parish communities, a true *corpus Christianum* where church and urban community were conjoined. It was by no means unknown for town mayors and churchwardens to co-operate in the administration of church properties, as was the case at Tenby, and town churches also did service in secular matters, as is clearly evidenced at Rhuddlan when the burgesses, summoned by the mayor, foregathered in the church to apportion between them the debt of 20 marks owed to the exchequer of Chester.<sup>49</sup> Likewise, by the fifteenth century, if not earlier, public buildings such as the town hall at Llandovery or the tollbooth at Oswestry had appeared, a clear expression of the emergence of a civic identity in a town.<sup>50</sup>

Moreover, the urban environment imposed many novel responsibilities and demands, and the intimacy and physical propinquity of life in a town subjected its residents to numerous disciplines and constraints. Concern for the urban infrastructure and for hygiene and sanitation in what was often an unhealthy, congested environment can be seen in the efforts made in several towns to regulate the amount of dung in the streets, to implement measures for the disposal of waste and for the building of privies, to care for town wells, to

protect town streets from being littered with small pits and holes and, on occasion, to provide for their paving at the townsmen's expense. Fire ordinances, such as those glimpsed in the small Flintshire borough of Caerwys or, most impressively, at Ruthin where detailed provisions, consequent on a serious town fire, were proclaimed, convey a sense of civic responsibility by ordering that fire-fighting equipment should be kept at the ready and by tightening control of incomers to the town.<sup>51</sup> Noisome trades, such as butchery or tanning, were, likewise, regulated by measures designed to prevent the casting of animal waste in the streets and by enjoining that meat should be sold only in prescribed shambles.

Most suggestive of all of a burgeoning sense of an urban identity is the presence, in many towns of the period, of an often substantial core of townspeople whose interests and allegiances were primarily urban in character. The dependence of towns on recruitment from the countryside, the failure, in many towns, to establish long-standing dynasties and the haemorrhage of urban capital from the town to the country in the form of investment in land might inhibit the inculcation of urban values and lifestyles. Yet a contrary view needs also to be addressed and more thoroughly investigated. In the first place, it would be quite wrong to discount the element of stability over time which can be identified in many Welsh towns. There were Sprottons, Colys and Bushells in fifteenth-century Rhuddlan just as their ancestors had owned property there following the conquest, while the Tidenhams may be seen transmitting their properties from father to son for much of the fourteenth century and beyond. Even the long-established towns of the south, although the evidence for their population (with the exception of Carmarthen and Haverfordwest) is more exiguous, may well have displayed much continuity, as is suggested by the Kidwelly Aylwards, or by several Haverfordwest families whose connection with the town can be charted for much of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Most indicative of a strong measure of stability in an urban population is the evidence provided by Ruthin, one of the most thriving and outward-looking of Welsh towns, and one of the few whose population can be studied in quite exceptional detail. There, according to its earliest rental, that of 1324, over 80 per cent of its property owners had property in the town only, while of those listed in the survey of 1483, over 60 per cent held no property beyond the town and its liberties.<sup>52</sup>

Moreover, although families like the Thelwalls or Exmewes, notable property owners in borough and rural commotes alike, were evident in town society for two centuries and more, other families who never aspired to purchasing property in the country – the small tradesmen and craftsmen – often display a remarkable longevity as residents of the town. The Grapenhalls, Bunburies, Barlycakes and Burdens, whose names pepper the court rolls of the town in the mid-fourteenth century, were still to be seen there a century later; the Bean lineage, bakers and brewers in Welsh Street, can be traced in



unbroken succession for five generations and more, while the Wittons, butchers, bakers, brewers and general victuallers, were a family whose residence in Ruthin can be securely documented for much of the late Middle Ages. Indeed, even when a family's association with a town as property owners apparently came to an end, their survival as tenants of urban rentiers or else in the female line can be shown; and the importance of female succession and transmission (the plague years of 1349–52, in particular, were years when over forty women inherited property in the town) and in preserving family continuity is patently clear. The Landingates, although no more is heard of the family by name after the death of Andrew de Landingate in the early fourteenth century, survived in the town through the marriages of three of his daughters into the families of Verdon, Hagley and Calf. Although it is the suggestion of a rapid turnover of urban property owners which has hitherto commanded attention (and the period following the Glyn Dŵr rebellion was certainly a watershed in Ruthin as it was in urban communities elsewhere), the evidence for stability and continuity in town populations must also be stressed.<sup>53</sup>

If we are right in our argument that urban communities might be more settled and rooted than has usually been recognized, the attitude of townspeople towards family and property also needs careful appraisal. Towns, it is often maintained, were beacons of individual liberty, whose property owners were free to dispose of their properties by sale or by will as they thought fit and where an early land market took root, an image amply confirmed by surviving deeds testifying to the flourishing market in burgages, tenements and plots in Welsh towns. But the strength of inherited right and the tenacity of family ownership in the urban milieu is equally clear. Sometimes town charters, such as that given to Cardiff in 1147 or the custom evident in fourteenth-century Rhuddlan which distinguished between property acquired by purchase which was devisable by will and property of inheritance which was not, suggest that Welsh urban liberties, no more than those of some Scottish towns, were not careless of the rights of expectant heirs, nor were townspeople negligent of their lines of descent and a strong consciousness of kin.<sup>54</sup> The point is amply borne out by a study of Ruthin, where property transfers for a period of ten years from 1389 to 1399, when the record is almost complete, have been analysed showing that over 40 per cent changed hands by inheritance or else were transactions effected between family and kin. Moreover, it would seem that inherited right became more and not less important as the period wore on and, despite the hiatus caused by the Glyn Dŵr rebellion, family transmission once more reasserted itself in subsequent decades. If the evidence which the town of Ruthin provides in abundance is representative of other small, seigniorial Welsh towns, then we must conclude that urban families were more stable and long-lasting than has been recognized so far.<sup>55</sup>

What is more, although recruitment of townspeople from rural communities,



both in England and Wales, is a well-documented and recognized phenomenon, a strong cohort of people who were town-dwellers by background can also be noted among the *adventii* of Welsh towns. The consistory court books of the diocese of Hereford, a diocese which counted several towns of the southern and middle March within its jurisdiction, provide illuminating evidence on this score, especially valuable in that they refer to a period, namely the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, when locational surnames were solidifying into hereditary appellations, and are less reliable as an index of geographical provenance. What is clearly revealed is the recruitment into the Welsh towns of the diocese – Monmouth, Knighton and Presteigne among them – of settlers from West Country towns such as Bridgewater, Plympton or Axbridge as well as from Welsh towns such as Holywell or Beaumaris, while at an earlier period, the towns of north Wales recruited from each other, the family connection sometimes made explicit in the record.<sup>56</sup> Connections between Ruthin, Rhuddlan, Denbigh and Caernarfon, among others, for instance, are revealed by the presence of families such as the Dawneys, the Helpstons, the Calfs and the Finers at one or more of these towns. Such interconnections between towns, representative examples which could easily be multiplied, not only suggest the interchange of manpower between towns, but also provide one explanation why the ‘burgesses of the towns of north Wales’, in particular, were able to make common cause at critical moments in the frequently fractious relationship between crown and community in the king’s lands of north Wales in the late Middle Ages.<sup>57</sup>

The prominence of women as agents of property transmission in urban societies also prompts an investigation into their role and importance in the towns, as yet a little understood aspect of urban life in the period. Not that the period constitutes a coherent and definable whole in so far as it concerns the fortunes of townswomen. Decades of a serious shortage of labour, as was especially true of the period following the plague, may have enhanced the importance of female productive labour in the towns, while conversely, by the latter part of our period, economic recession had begun to erode the work opportunities available to women. The different demands of pastoral and arable economies also exerted important influences on the readiness and ability of working-age women to enter the towns, while deeprooted cultural assumptions about the role proper to women, especially the unmarried, as well as the diversity of their property rights in the different legal systems of the numerous jurisdictions into which Wales was divided, also impacted on their role in the towns.<sup>58</sup> However, even if it cannot be shown, from the sources available to the investigators of Welsh towns, that women were numerically preponderant, as can be demonstrated in English towns in the late fourteenth century, their prominence and visibility in the urban milieu is unquestionable. As property owners in their own right, as joint tenants with their husband (an early development in the law of marital property in Wales), or as widows holding in

dower, a good proportion of the burgages, workshops and shops of the Welsh medieval town lay in female hands while women not infrequently applied for and were granted the right to trade in a town. As spinners and websters, sempstresses, nurses, washerwomen, hewsters, hucksters, piemakers, brewsters and bakers, they were productive members of urban society or offered essential services to the town.

Although many of the occupations undertaken by women in towns overlapped with the work done by them in the countryside, some aspects of the economic role assumed by townswomen nonetheless contrasted with those of the rural communities. Brewing for sale, for example, was mainly confined to the towns, the dominance of women in the commercial production of ale reflected in the regular licensing fees paid by women (or by their husbands on their behalf ) and their possession of brewing implements or of the necessary raw materials for their trade.<sup>59</sup> More cautiously, because the evidence on this score is far more elusive, females may have been more prevalent as servants in urban than in rural communities, while brothels or stews (*lupanas*), kept by men and by women, were almost exclusively an urban preserve.<sup>60</sup> On the basis of a comparison between the cases brought to court in urban and rural communities, it may also be suggested that women were far more likely to sue or to be sued for detinue and debt, either alone or with their husbands, in town courts than they were in the courts of rural localities, and townswomen were likewise more often appointed as executrices of their deceased husbands' estate in the towns. Most suggestive of all of the enhanced public profile of women in towns, albeit a phenomenon which requires careful and sensitive analysis, is the increasing presentation of the scold or the chider (*rixatrix*, *litigatrix*, *obiurgatrix*, *garulatrix*) in the town courts. Evident in those of the borough of Clun as well as in those of Ruthin from the late fourteenth century onwards, the indictments of women for scolding within urban communities contrasts very sharply with the almost complete absence of comparable accusations in the courts of the rural localities.<sup>61</sup>

No less suggestive of the diversity of the work opportunities offered by towns are the crafts, trades and service occupations in which men were engaged, although there is no comprehensive record, comparable to the poll tax assessment of English urban communities, of the occupational structure of any one town at a particular point in its late-medieval history.<sup>62</sup> Crafts and trades, to be sure, reflected changing consumer requirements over time at all social levels, while by the late fifteenth century some towns such as Monmouth, where cap-making had become prominent, were beginning to specialize in particular commodities. A careful and thorough analysis of the occupational structure of Haverfordwest, conducted on the basis of surviving property deeds, has suggested the presence of between thirty and forty non-agrarian trades in the town before the mid-sixteenth century, distributed amongst categories such as victualling, building, leatherwork, textiles and general mercantile found in

many medieval towns; a rough count of Caernarfon's occupations on the basis of the surviving late-fourteenth-century court rolls of the towns reveals much the same pattern of diversity, although, in the case of the castle-borough, the linchpin of royal administration for the principality of north Wales, administrators and their officials must have augmented the professional element in the town.<sup>63</sup>

By the fifteenth century, craft guilds can be identified in several towns, including Cardiff, Monmouth, Ruthin and Haverfordwest, and the nexus of master, journeymen and apprentices which is sometimes revealed at Beaumaris or Ruthin, lends credence to the suggestion that Welsh towns provided opportunities for young people to learn specialized crafts in late medieval Wales.<sup>64</sup> Likewise, town streets, not infrequently, carried the name of the preponderant calling or craft of their residents, as was the case in the Mason Street of the small borough of Flint, or at Cardiff which boasted its Shoemakers Street and its Smiths Street.<sup>65</sup> Although visual evidence sometimes suggests a sense of distinct occupational identity, as is revealed by the sepulchral slab of David Smith of Brecon, proudly displaying a farrier's rasp and a horseshoe, or the brass which may still be seen in Llanbeblig church in Caernarfon depicting the inkhorn and penner of Richard Foxwist, an eminent scrivener of the town, the artisans and craftsmen of Welsh towns were, in general, versatile in their skills and did not normally restrict themselves exclusively to one calling. Despite the legislation enacted in several Welsh towns which forbade the exercise of more than one craft (easily circumvented with a fine), the evidence suggests a marked lack of specialization among town-dwellers. Dafydd ap Hopcyn of Ruthin, for instance, undoubtedly earned much of his living by sewing and tailoring, but he also sold foodstuffs and ale and kept sheep, just as the range of Henry Thelwall's commercial activities was very much wider than his trade as a baker, for which he was regularly presented in the town courts.<sup>66</sup> The presence of clockmakers and of clocks in some of the towns (there was an *horloger* in midfourteenth-century Ruthin, a clockmaker in Caernarfon and a clockhouse at Newport by the early sixteenth century) also raises important questions about the temporal framework of towns and the distinctive rhythms of work which are sometimes perceived as the hallmarks of urban societies. Although clocks had by no means superseded the tolling of bells as markers of time in the late-medieval Welsh town – the townspeople of Abergavenny had, indeed, set up a fund to pay for a new peal of bells in the town church – an increasing precision of measurement and the subordination of townspeople to the disciplines of the hour may be discerned, albeit dimly, by the end of the fifteenth century.<sup>67</sup>

To what extent the occupational diversity characteristic of urban society created or reflected a distinctively urban standard of living is an important issue which remains relatively unexplored in the context of the medieval Welsh town. Such a study would demand not only a command of the documentary

sources but also a comprehensive analysis of archaeological deposits from cess pits, middens and burial grounds, of the kind from which investigators of English urban communities are able to profit, and such work may yet uncover some of the ways in which the diets and material comforts of Welsh urban and rural society diverged.<sup>68</sup> Likewise, while valuable work has been done on the domestic structures of some towns, the architecture of many others remain unexplored. The diets, housing and material prosperity of townspeople undoubtedly varied according to the levels of wealth and social position and there is some evidence to suggest the existence in Welsh towns, as in those of England, of a fast-food trade which catered for the needs of the poorer sectors of urban society and their housing in lodgings or rooms.<sup>69</sup> Town-dwellers were also susceptible to food shortages, epidemic diseases and to serious health problems, and the regulations designed to safeguard a cheap and plentiful supply of wholesome foodstuffs betokens the need for constant vigilance on the part of urban authorities to safeguard against dearth and undue profiteering. If the excavations conducted at the Augustinian priory of Carmarthen, where the skeletal remains of 125 persons were recovered, are indicative of mortality in the Welsh towns of the period, over half of those interred in the priory's precincts, including at least one family group buried together, had died before reaching thirty-five years of age, while analysis of organic deposits have suggested that intestinal parasites such as whip-worms and round-worms may have been common afflictions.<sup>70</sup> On the other hand, evidence is also emerging that the urban diet might be both varied and rich. The occupants of the so-called 'merchant' house of late-fifteenth-century Tenby were consuming at least fifteen species of fish, as might be expected in a sea-faring community, while apples, strawberries and raspberries as well as the more exotic figs, raisins and prunes show the importance of local and imported fruit in the diet.<sup>71</sup> The proliferation of regular bakers – the number of bakers at Ruthin almost doubled in the late 1360s and remained at a high level thereafter – and references to the production of wastel bread and cocket loaves suggest that in the towns of Wales, as of England, a higher quality of bread was being consumed by at least some members of town populations.<sup>72</sup> Documentary sources likewise reveal the substantial presence of butchers, many trading over a number of years, yet others transmitting their business from father to son, and the activities of leave-lookers, supervising the quality and price of the meat or issuing injunctions such as the one that goat meat and mutton should not be offered for sale intermixed. Analyses of animal bones also suggest that some town-dwellers enjoyed high-quality meat from young animals especially bred and butchered for domestic consumption, while the relative absence of skeletal remains of deer, rabbit and wild-fowl suggests that hunting and food-gathering was not an economic necessity.<sup>73</sup> Wills and extant inventories of the goods and chattels of townspeople, although few in number, together with references to the chattels of felons and intestates (in those towns where the lord had not relinquished his

right to their forfeit), also reflect a degree of material prosperity in the form of silver spoons, paternosters of amber or silver and jewellery, household accoutrements of pewter as well as soft furnishings, bed linen and napery.<sup>74</sup>

If the diet and material possessions of townspeople are suggestive of the development of distinctively urban tastes, so, too, were the private dwellings of townsmen beginning to reflect the particular requirements of town dwellers in their domestic appointments. By the late fourteenth century, the presence of slaters and tilers and references to roofing in stone or in slate (*tegulae*) are increasingly encountered in town records. Likewise, although an archetypal town house is difficult to identify and local materials and conventions common to those of the rural hinterlands were often dominant in construction, in those towns where the commercial potential of street frontages was held at a premium the erection of narrow town houses, consisting of more than one floor with shops or workrooms having access to the streets and living accommodation or solars above them, was preferred.<sup>75</sup> Such buildings were much in evidence in late-fifteenth-century Ruthin, if the numerous licences granted to set posts to provide for solars projecting over the streets proceeded from planning application to execution, while the few medieval examples which are all that remain of the once 'beauteous' townscape of Presteigne suggest that, by then, the storeyed house of fine craftsmanship was being constructed. It is, indeed, tempting to suggest that in the social arrangement of the town-dweller's house, a protean bourgeois domesticity was being created, and a consciousness of privacy enhanced.<sup>76</sup> It is, after all, in the urban environment that eavesdroppers, night stalkers and those who listened and intruded on the private worlds of their neighbours, were most frequently and punctiliously indicted.<sup>77</sup> It is within the urban milieu, too, among the possessions of a townswoman, that a rare example of the perusal of a Book of Hours in late medieval Wales can be found.<sup>78</sup>

The construction and expression of a sense of identity is often a complex and ambiguous process and nowhere is this more the case than in the history and historiography of the medieval Welsh town. No one would now wish to explain the sense of an urban identity in Wales solely in terms of an ethnic duality, despite the fitful grandstanding postures of burgesses and the protectionist legislation of royal and seigniorial regimes. Nor, in so far as our evidence allows us to judge, was an urban identity conveyed by elaborate civic rituals or by the bounded world of the town chronicler, nor yet by the mercantile attributes and aspirations of men such as Richard Bulkeley. Rather, as this study has attempted to show, the distinctiveness of the Welsh medieval town may be found in the totality of the often humdrum *minutiae* of social and economic modalities and in the expectations nourished by town populations of a well-ordered civil society. It is there that the foundations of an enduring urban identity must be sought.

<sup>1</sup>J. M. Lewis, *Welsh Monumental Brasses: A Guide* (Cardiff, 1974), pp. 46–7; see also M. H. Bloxam, ‘On certain monumental effigies in Tenby Church, South Wales’, *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, fourth ser., 11 (1880), 128–31 (effigy of a Tenby merchant, possibly John White). Cf. the use of the term *prudens mercator* at Norwich; see R. Horrox, ‘The urban gentry in the fifteenth century’, in J. A. F. Thomson (ed.), *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century* (Gloucester, 1988), p. 42, n. 65. For Beaumaris, see A. D. Carr, *Medieval Anglesey* (2nd edn, Llangefni, 2011), pp. 189–204. My thanks to Tony Carr, Ann Parry Owen and Huw Meirion Edwards for their kindnesses while this paper was being prepared. All references to unpublished sources are to The National Archives (TNA) unless otherwise noted. References to the Dyffryn Clwyd court rolls are to the calendared rolls in E.S.R.C. Data Archive 3679, cited as ‘Database’, or to the uncalendared rolls (SC2/215/64–SC2/225/15). I hope to be able to write more extensively on several issues broached in this paper on another occasion.

<sup>2</sup>The presence of poets in the towns is sometimes revealed in record sources, for example, SC2/223/20, m. 1 (1494–1495), Tudur Aled as pledge for the sale of a horse at Ruthin; Herefordshire Record Office, Records of the Consistory Courts of the Bishop of Hereford, 0/8, pp. 67, 70, 74, Bedo Brwynllys at Knighton. From among numerous mentions of European cities see, for example, D. Johnston (ed.), *Gwaith Lewys Glyn Cothi* (Cardiff, 1995), no. 65 (a *cywydd* addressed to the abbot of Whitland). The most recent general survey of the medieval Welsh town is the excellent chapter, R. A. Griffiths, ‘Wales and the Marches’, in D. M. Palliser (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, Vol. 1, 600–1540* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 681–714.

<sup>3</sup>For the term *bwrdeisiaidd*, see below, n. 72. *Bwrdeisiaeth* appears in a *cywydd* to the birch tree (‘*r Fedwen*’) by Gruffudd ab Adda (c.1340–70), D. Johnston (ed.), *Blodeugerdd Barddas o’r Bedwaredd Ganrif ar Ddeg* (2nd edn, Llandybïe, 1998), pp. 94–6, which is described as *disyml*, a word translated as ‘artless’ in Huw M. Edwards, *Dafydd ap Gwilym: Influences and Analogues* (Oxford, 1996), p. 147, but the word could also be interpreted as ‘refined’. I am grateful to Dr Edwards for the opportunity to discuss the matter with him. Cf. the term *burgeiserie* in contemporary English literature discussed in F. Riddy, ‘“Burgeis” domesticity in late-medieval England’, in M. Kowaleski and P. J. P. Goldberg (eds), *Medieval Domesticity: Home, Housing and Household in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 14–36.

<sup>4</sup>I note only the more important *cywyddau* addressed to specific towns although the literature has been read more generally in preparation for this study: T. Parry (ed.), *Gwaith Dafydd ap Gwilym* (Cardiff, 1952), no. 134 (Newborough); J. Ll. Williams and I. Williams (eds), *Gwaith Guto’r Glyn* (Cardiff, 1939), no. 69; T. Gwynn Jones (ed.), *Gwaith Tudur Aled* (Cardiff, 1926), no. 65; *Gwaith Lewys Glyn Cothi*, no. 208 (Oswestry); L. Harries (ed.), *Gwaith Huw Cae Llwyd ac Eraill* (Cardiff, 1953), no. 51 (Brecon); A. Cynfael Lake (ed.), *Gwaith Sion Ceri* (Aberystwyth, 1996), no. 51 (Newtown). For Hywel



Praints, see *Gwaith Lewys Glyn Cothi*, nos 106, 107 and, for Sion Terel, J. M. Williams and E. I. Rowlands (eds), *Gwaith Rhys Brydydd a Rhisiart ap Rhys* (Cardiff, 1976), no. 3. See also Helen Fulton, 'Trading places: representations of urban culture in medieval Welsh poetry', *Studia Celtica*, 31 (1997), 219–31 and below.

<sup>5</sup>For the musical tradition see S. Harper, *Music in Welsh Culture Before 1650: A Study of the Principal Sources* (Ashgate, 2007). References to schools and schoolmasters can sometimes be found in record sources, for example, National Library of Wales (NLW) Millborne, 452 (Monmouth in 1477); TNA, Records of the courts of the Palatinate of Chester, CHES 30/8, m. 41v (1345–1346, Lleucu, wife of 'le Scolemaster' at Rhuddlan). For the school at Oswestry see Llinos Beverley Smith, 'Oswestry', in R. A. Griffiths (ed.), *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales* (Cardiff, 1978), p. 227n.

<sup>6</sup>*Gwaith Dafydd ap Gwilym*, no. 25.49 (*pilori*); no. 134.25 (*paement*); no. 62.24 (*bwrdaes*). For the terms, see *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru*, s.v. For *gildio*, see N. Jacobs, 'Geirfa diota Dafydd: GDG 132, 1–6 *gildio*, golden ladin', *Studia Celtica*, 28 (1994), 174–7.

<sup>7</sup>For similar equivocations in English literature, see Riddy, "'Burgeis" domesticity', pp. 18–20.

<sup>8</sup>See, for example, P. Abrams, 'Towns and economic growth. Some theories and problems', in P. Abrams and E. A. Wrigley (eds), *Towns in Societies: Essays in Economic History and Historical Sociology* (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 9–35 and the literature cited.

<sup>9</sup>R. H. Britnell, 'Urban demand in the English economy, 1300–1600', in idem, *Markets, Trade and Economic Development in England and Europe, 1050–1550* (Ashgate Variorum, 2009), no. XX, p. 19.

<sup>10</sup>S. Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe, 900–1300* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 67–78, 155–218.

<sup>11</sup>M. Rubin, 'Religious culture in town and country: reflections on a great divide', in D. Abulafia, M. Franklin and M. Rubin (eds), *Church and City 1000–1500: Essays in Honour of Christopher Brooke* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 3–22; Horrox, 'Urban gentry', pp. 22–45.

<sup>12</sup>R. H. Britnell, 'Urban economic regulation and economic morality in medieval England', in idem, *Markets, Trade and Economic Development*, no. XIX; G. Rosser, 'Urban culture and the church, 1300–1540', in Palliser (ed.), *Cambridge Urban History*, I, pp. 335–69 (at pp. 368–9); C. Dyer, 'Introduction', in K. Giles and C. Dyer (eds), *Town and Country in the Middle Ages* (Leeds, 2005), pp. 1–7.

<sup>13</sup>A. C. Reeves, 'Newport', in Griffiths (ed.), *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales*, p. 214; for *targes*, see R. A. Brown, H. M. Colvin and A. J. Taylor, *The History of the King's Works: The Middle Ages*, 2 vols (London, 1963), I, p. 364, n. 1; L.

Toulmin Smith (ed.), *The Itinerary in Wales of John Leland* (London, 1906), p. 98. Later archaeological opinion assumes that the statue is that of either Edward I or Edward II, but Leland's identification seems the more likely; there is a statue of Edward II at Caernarfon.

<sup>14</sup>R. R. Davies, 'Brecon', in Griffiths (ed.), *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales*, p. 54; W. H. Howse, 'Notes on Presteigne church', *Transactions of the Radnorshire Society*, 22 (1952), 26–9; J. M. Lewis, *The Medieval Tiles of Wales: Census of Medieval Tiles in Britain* (Cardiff, 1999), no. 343 (p. 55), although the author notes the possibility that Stafford connections may explain the tile design. I thank Dr Mark Redknap for the reference.

<sup>15</sup>For the charters, see *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales*, passim. Among the earliest examples of the limitation of the sale of burgages to English assigns (*assignez Engleys*) in charters are the second and undated charter granted to Denbigh (D. Huw Owen, 'The two foundation charters of the borough of Denbigh', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 28 [1978–1980], 253–66); and the royal foundation charter of the borough of Bala (Llinos Beverley Smith, 'Towns and trade', in J. Beverley Smith and Llinos Beverley Smith [eds], *History of Merioneth, Vol. II, The Middle Ages* [Cardiff, 2001], pp. 230–1). For the erroneous claim by the lawyers of the Black Prince that Welshmen were prohibited from being burgesses at Rhuddlan by the Statute of Wales (1284), see CHES 30/4, m. 63v.

<sup>16</sup>See especially R. R. Davies, *The Revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 221–3 and sources.

<sup>17</sup>SC2/219/7, m. 6v (Ruthin); W. R. B. Robinson, 'The charter granted to Chepstow by Charles, earl of Worcester in 1524', *National Library of Wales Journal*, 20 (1977–1978), 85–95.

<sup>18</sup>For the claim made in relation to the borough of Usk, see NLW MS 17008D ('The Brown Book of Usk'), f. 298v; for Ruthin, see SC2/223/22, m. 3 (subsidy granted by the burgesses at the 'first coming' of lady Katherine, wife of George Grey, 1495–1496); SC2/222/1, m. 77 (subsidy of 20 marks for marriage of lord's daughter, 1435–1436).

<sup>19</sup>Davies, 'Brecon', pp. 53–4; Smith, 'Oswestry', pp. 240–1.

<sup>20</sup>G. G. Francis (ed.), *Charters granted to Swansea, the Chief Borough of the Seignory of Gower 1215–1837* (London, 1867), p. 5 (trans. W. H. Jones, *History of Swansea and of the Lordship of Gower* [Carmarthen, 1920], p. 304); G. T. Clark (ed.), *Cartae et Alia Munimenta quae ad Dominium de Glamorgancie Pertinent*, 6 vols (Talygarn, 1910), III, p. 990 (Braose charter to Gower); S. Dimmock, 'Haverfordwest: an exemplar for the study of southern Welsh towns in the later middle ages', *Welsh History Review*, 22 (2004–2005), 1–28 (on 12–13); idem, 'Reassessing the towns of southern Wales in the later middle ages', *Urban History*, 32 (2005), 33–45; *Register of Edward the Black Prince, 1346–1365*, part III (London, 1932), p. 164.



<sup>21</sup>See, for example, C. Dyer, 'Small towns 1270–1540' in Palliser (ed.), *Cambridge Urban History*, I, pp. 532–4, although others stress the importance of size in the development of a specifically urban identity.

<sup>22</sup>See, for example, P. Moore (ed.), *The Borough Ordinances of Cowbridge in Glamorgan* (Cardiff, 1986), p. 15 (dated 1510/11 but believed to be copied from an earlier roll). There are many examples both in print and unprinted.

<sup>23</sup>W. Rees (ed.), *Calendar of Ancient Petitions Relating to Wales* (Cardiff, 1975), p. 236 (petition of Henry Somour, burgess of Conwy); Smith, 'Towns and trade', p. 239 (John Colier of Harlech).

<sup>24</sup>See, for example, Shropshire Record Office 552/1/14; 552/1/21 for men from Ceri, Arwystli and Maelienydd at Clun; for urban wills see H. Chandler, 'The will in medieval Wales to 1540' (unpublished MPhil. thesis, University of Wales, 1991), especially 234–74.

<sup>25</sup>See, for example, for Rhuddlan, A. J. Taylor, 'The earliest burgesses of Flint and Rhuddlan', *Flintshire Historical Society Journal*, 27 (1975–1976), 152–60; A. Jones, 'A fifteenth-century document of Rhuddlan', *Flintshire Historical Society Publications*, 4 (1914–1915), 45–90. For Haverfordwest deeds, see Dimmock, 'Haverfordwest: an exemplar'; and for Ruthin rentals, below, n. 52.

<sup>26</sup>H. Ellis (ed.), *Registrum vulgariter nuncupatum: 'The Record of Caernarvon'* (London, 1838), p. 225; CHES 30/5, m. 11; SC6/1175/8; CHES 30/4, m. 8 (1356–1357, Flint burgess successfully defends status as burgess although he is living *in forinseco*). See also Clark, *Cartae et Alia Munimenta*, IV, p. 1420 (Neath).

<sup>27</sup>For the phrase used in relation to the flight of the French bourgeoisie into officialdom, see R. H. Hilton, *English and French Towns in Feudal Society: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 104.

<sup>28</sup>See, from much evidence, the *plasau* of Caernarfon's gentry: K. Williams-Jones, 'Caernarvon', in Griffiths (ed.), *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales*, p. 92; Clwyd Record Office, DD/WY/1528 (arrangements for the burial of members of the Thelwall family at the church of St Peter in Ruthin).

<sup>29</sup>See the comments in J. G. Jones (ed.), *Sir John Wynn: History of the Gwydir Family and Memoir* (Llandysul, 1990), p. 51, on the intermarriage of merchant and landed families.

<sup>30</sup>*Gwaith Lewys Glyn Cothi*, no. 68.2; no. 217. For the identification of *uchelwyr* with the towns see, for example, *Gwaith Guto'r Glyn*, no. 22.19 (Alegsander Wregsam); *Gwaith Tudur Aled*, no. 119.21.

<sup>31</sup>C. Dyer, 'The hidden trade of the middle ages: evidence from the West Midlands', in idem, *Everyday Life in Medieval England* (London, 2000), pp. 283–305; for south-east Wales see the excellent study by R. Weeks, 'Markets, trade and industry', in R. A. Griffiths, A. Hopkins and R. Howell (eds), *Gwent County History, Vol. II: The Age of the Marcher Lords, c. 1070–1536* (Cardiff, 2008), pp.

142–62; P. Courtney, ‘Urbanism and “feudalism” on the periphery: some thoughts from Marcher Wales’, in Giles and Dyer (eds), *Town and Country*, pp. 65–84; Shropshire Record Office 552/9 (court rolls of the lordship of Clun, 1381, injunctions against those who made *novas nundinas*); J. Beverley Smith, ‘Cydfodau o’r bymthegfed ganrif’, *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 21 (1964–1966), 309–24; P. Ó Riain, ‘Boundary association in early Irish society’, *Studia Celtica*, 7 (1972), 26.

<sup>32</sup>F. McCormick, ‘The distribution of meat in a hierarchical society: the Irish evidence’, in P. Miracle and N. Milner (eds), *Consuming Passions and Patterns of Consumption* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 25–31.

<sup>33</sup>W. J. Slack, *The Lordship of Oswestry 1393–1607* (Shrewsbury, 1951), p. 151 (tenter frame in Oswestry in 1393); Dimmock, ‘Haverfordwest: an exemplar’, 18 (fulling mill in Haverfordwest).

<sup>34</sup>R. A. Griffiths, ‘Carmarthen’, *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales*, pp. 162–3; Smith, ‘Oswestry’, pp. 227–8.

<sup>35</sup>The extension of the right to trade in boroughs to non-residents was an early development at, for example, Carmarthen (Griffiths, ‘Carmarthen’, pp. 149–50), rather later at, for example, Ruthin, when the 1360s witnessed the most important developments. There are no known lists of ‘foreign’ burgesses comparable to those of Ipswich or Shrewsbury (for which see J. Masschaele, ‘Urban trade in medieval England: the evidence of foreign gild membership lists’, in P. R. Coss and S. D. Lloyd [eds], *Thirteenth Century England*, 5 [1995], 115–29), but the Ruthin material would repay more detailed investigation.

<sup>36</sup>D. G. Walker, ‘Cardiff’, in Griffiths (ed.), *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales*, p. 12; R. I. Jack, ‘Ruthin’, *ibid.*, pp. 255–6; Dimmock, ‘Haverfordwest: an exemplar’, 11–12.

<sup>37</sup>For rolls of the prior’s court at Cydweli, see SC2/215/39–41; for the property of the prior of Ruthin in the town (including a burgage with a tavern behind it) see Clwyd Record Office, DD/WY/1523–27; for Monmouth priory, T. Hopkins, ‘The towns’, *Gwent County History*, II, pp. 130–1, 134; for Carmarthen and the rivalries of the two towns, see Griffiths, ‘Carmarthen’, pp. 153–4.

<sup>38</sup>The regime of the Black Prince in the Principality of north Wales was a period when purges were made at seigniorial behest for financial reasons. See R. R. Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence and Change: Wales 1063–1415* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 391–411, for the political context. See also Williams-Jones, ‘Caernarvon’, p. 100. The internal politics of Welsh boroughs deserves further investigation.

<sup>39</sup>For early-fourteenth-century Ruthin, see the excellent detailed study by M. Stevens, ‘Wealth, status and “race” in the Ruthin of Edward II’, *Urban History*, 32 (2005), 17–32; see also M. Stevens, *Urban Assimilation in Post-Conquest Wales: Ethnicity, Gender and Economy in Ruthin, 1282–1348* (Cardiff, 2010). My own analysis of Ruthin materials for later periods confirms the relative

openness of Ruthin town government. For Ruthin burgesses, see R. I. Jack, 'The seigneurial charters of the borough of Ruthin', *National Library of Wales Journal*, 16 (1969–1970), 77–86. For similar conclusions on the burgess community of Brecon, see Davies, 'Brecon', pp. 57–8. Larger towns such as Haverfordwest or Carmarthen, however, may have exhibited a more pronounced merchant/gentry interest (for example, Dimmock, 'Haverfordwest: an exemplar', 24–6; idem, 'The Custom Book of Chepstow, 1535–6', *Studia Celtica*, 38 (2004), 131–49 (although the charter of 1524 stresses the inclusion of craftsmen as burgesses) and there are certainly gentry interests in many late-fifteenth-century and early-sixteenth-century towns. See also M. Griffiths, "'Very wealthy by merchandise"? Urban fortunes', in J. G. Jones (ed.), *Class, Community and Culture in Tudor Wales* (Cardiff, 1989), pp. 197–237.

<sup>40</sup>A. J. Taylor, 'Notes on Savoyard and other foreign craftsmen employed by Edward I in Wales', in *History of the King's Works*, II, pp. 1036–40; SC2/219/11, m. 2; SC2/221/4, m. 20 (Michael and Felicia de Picardy at Ruthin). For Monmouth, see J. Webb, 'Parliamentary taxation in Monmouthshire' (unpublished MA dissertation, University of Wales, 1987), 81, 83, 154–6. See also Llinos Beverley Smith, 'The Welsh language before 1536', in G. H. Jenkins (ed.), *The Welsh Language Before the Industrial Revolution* (Cardiff, 1997), p. 28 (for French spoken at Conwy and Swansea) and p. 16 (the Irish in Wales); for 'duchesman', see Dimmock, 'Haverfordwest: an exemplar', 15; SC2/220/7, m. 8v (Denbigh and Ruthin).

<sup>41</sup>Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence and Change*, pp. 391–411; J. Beverley Smith, "'Distinction and diversity": the Common Lawyers and the law of Wales', in H. Pryce and J. Watts (eds), *Power and Identity in the Middle Ages: Essays in Memory of Rees Davies* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 139–152, especially pp. 143–5.

<sup>42</sup>W. Rees, 'The charters of the boroughs of Brecon and Llandovery', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 2 (1922–1925), 258. For Ruthin see, for example, SC2/223/11, m. 2 (permission, for a fine of 13s.4d., to purchase land in the town 'although he is a Welshman by blood'); SC2/223/9, m. 2 (a man, denied admittance as a burgess because he is Welsh, claims to be 'thoroughly English by blood', *mere Anglici de sanguine*). For the persistence of hostilities in early-sixteenth-century Gwynedd see J. Beverley Smith, 'Crown and community in the principality of North Wales in the reign of Henry Tudor', *Welsh History Review*, 3 (1966–1967), 145–71; Williams-Jones, 'Caernarvon', pp. 100–1.

<sup>43</sup>Ann Parry Owen, *Gwaith Llywelyn Brydydd Hoddnant, Dafydd ap Gwilym, Hilyn ac Eraill* (Aberystwyth, 1996), no. 4.50.

<sup>44</sup>D. M. Palliser, 'Town and village formation in medieval England', in idem, *Towns and Local Communities in Medieval and Early Modern England* (Ashgate, Variorum, 2006), no. II.

<sup>45</sup>For town defences as a manifestation of a civic identity, see Palliser, 'Town defences in medieval England and Wales', in *Towns and Local Communities*, no.

V; on boundary stones as definitions of town limits, see Carr, *Medieval Anglesey*, pp. 209–10; on bars (*lez barres*) at Ruthin see, for example, SC2/221/4, mm. 27v, 34. Street names sometimes suggest the lines of approach into a town, such as ‘Stryd Gwŷr y Gogledd’ (‘Northmen’s Street’) and ‘Stryd Gwŷr Deheubarth’ (‘Southmen’s Street’) in Machynlleth (NLW, Pennal Towers, 9; Clwyd Record Office, DD/WY/3723).

<sup>46</sup>My impression is that references to shops become increasingly common in Welsh towns from the late fourteenth century onwards although there are earlier references, for example, Database Reliefs/257 (1314–1315). Farms of the town of Ruthin in the fifteenth century increasingly include the mention of shops and pentices, for example, SC2/221/4, m. 24 (1401–1402), SC2/222/3, m. 6 (1440–1441). For shops *sive ospal* (workshops), see, for example, SC2/223/21 (1495–1496). For broad streets as locations of stalls, see Hopkins, ‘The towns’, p. 125; Database D/5130 (injunctions concerning alestakes at Ruthin).

<sup>47</sup>D. Huw Owen, ‘Denbigh’, in Griffiths (ed.), *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales*, p. 165; SC2/218/8, m. 14 (soldiers arrayed for war in market of Ruthin, 1360–1361); SC2/224/3, m. 1 (proclamation made *in pleno foro ville de Ruthin*).

<sup>48</sup>For pillories, tumbrels and thews and their association with market towns see J. Masschaele, ‘The public space of the marketplace in medieval England’, *Speculum*, 77 (2002), 400–1; D. Postles, ‘Penance and the market place: a reformation dialogue with the medieval church, c.1250–c.1600’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 54 (2003), 441–68; for claims to a right to a tumbrel in *quo warranto* proceedings, see Ellis (ed.), *Record of Caernarvon*, pp. 135–6, 244; for an order to the bailiffs to repair ‘le thewe’ (*collistrigium*), situated near the market place at Ruthin, see SC2/219/1, m. 5v (1364–1365); fine for not being subjected to the judgement of the pillory, SC2/215/72 (1312–1313). There was a ‘Pillorystreet’ at Rhuddlan (NLW, Gwysaney, 352). I know of no rural examples of such features. For penances enacted in the market places of medieval Welsh towns see, for example, Hereford Record Office, O/3 (1445–1446), p. 28 (Radnor); O/4 (1447–1448), p. 67 (Montgomery) and, for the Ruthin case, DeLloyd J. Guth, ‘Enforcing late-medieval law: patterns in litigation during Henry VII’s reign’, in J. H. Baker (ed.), *Legal Records and the Historian* (London, 1978), p. 90.

<sup>49</sup>CHES 30/8, m. 9 (1341–1342).

<sup>50</sup>Rees, ‘Charters of the boroughs of Brecon and Llandovery’, 260, granting the burgesses the right to build a ‘ginhaldam (sic) que vulgariter bothall ibidem nominatur’; Slack, *Lordship of Oswestry*, p. 151 (‘le tolbothe’).

<sup>51</sup>R. I. Jack, ‘The fire ordinances of Ruthin, 1364’, *Transactions of the Denbighshire Historical Society*, 28 (1979), 5–17; CHES 30/24, m. 49 (Caerwys). For ordinances regulating the urban infrastructure, see, for example, among many such examples, for Ruthin, SC2/222/1, m. 58 (digging in market and

street and throwing rubbish into the river); SC2/222/4, m. 22 (injunctions about the disposal of dung); for Caernarfon, G. P. Jones and H. Owen (eds), *Caernarvon Court Rolls, 1361–1402* (Caernarfon, 1951), p. 51. Ordinances regulating games of chance, the receiving of minstrels and westours and, increasingly in the early sixteenth century, of vagabonds are also common in towns.

<sup>52</sup>For printed rentals of the lordship of Dyffryn Clwyd, including the borough of Ruthin, in chronological order: R. I. Jack, 'Records of Denbighshire lordships, II, the lordship of Dyffryn Clwyd in 1324', *Trans. Denbs. Hist. Soc.*, 17 (1968), 7–53; M. Richards, 'Records of Denbighshire lordships, I, the lordship of Dyffryn Clwyd in 1465', *Trans. Denbs. Hist. Soc.*, 15 (1966), 15–54. The rental of 1483 (much the most informative), SC12/24/1, remains unpublished. Jack, 'Ruthin', p. 249, gives 'over a third' as the number of owners of urban property who held land in the commotes, but this still suggests a marked preponderance of those who held only town properties.

<sup>53</sup>This paragraph is based on a more detailed study of the court rolls and surveys of the period from c.1350 onwards. Subletting is occasionally mentioned in the documents (for example, Database D/2077, 4388; NLW Kimmel, 1600/66). See also the rental of the Holland property in Bala (SC2/12/25/1, 2) and the property of Ibulo Thelwall in Ruthin and the commotes (NLW Wynnstay [1952 Deposit], 86, ff. 92–6, 98–100), but there is no means of analysing the significance nor the demand for rented property; cf. Dimmock, 'Haverfordwest: an exemplar', 3–9. For what a tithing list (for which there are no Welsh examples) can reveal of the urban rented property market, see E. Routledge, 'Landlords and tenants: housing and the rented property market in early-fourteenth-century Norwich', *Urban History*, 22 (1995), 7–25. There were certainly numerous burgess investors as well as institutional investors in urban property in the Welsh towns. The statistics for transfers of borough property 1349–1352 are drawn from Database, Rolls 10–12.

<sup>54</sup>Walker, 'Cardiff', pp. 120–1 and sources cited; CHES 30/10, m. 36; SC2/219/2, m. 6v (1364–1365); 219/3, m. 4 (1365–1366), remoter kinship ties in Ruthin. See also NLW Llanfair and Brynodynol, D.919, a detailed pedigree of the Spicer family of Caernarfon.

<sup>55</sup>From Database Rolls B and D, and SC2/ 222–225 (the court rolls for the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries).

<sup>56</sup>Llinos Beverley Smith, 'A view from an ecclesiastical court: mobility and marriage in a border society', in R. R. Davies and G. H. Jenkins (eds), *From Medieval to Modern Wales: Historical Essays in Honour of Kenneth O. Morgan and Ralph A. Griffiths* (Cardiff, 2004), pp. 74–5 and sources cited; R. A. Griffiths, 'Urban colonisation in England and Wales in the later Middle Ages: examples and implications', in M. Boone and P. Stabel (eds), *Shaping Urban Identity in Late-Medieval Europe* (Leuven, 2000), especially pp. 231–2; NLW Gwysaney,

340 and Database Forties passim (Calf at Rhuddlan and Ruthin); Database Forties passim (Dawneys at Denbigh and Ruthin); NLW Elwes, 10 (1336) and Database Forties passim (Helpston at Caernarfon and Ruthin); for marriages between Ruthin and Rhuddlan families, see, for example, SC2/222/3, m. 6 (1440–1441, Billyng and Roper). There seems to be much movement between towns of equivalent ranking in Wales, although movement from smaller to larger towns is also well documented. This point deserves further study.

<sup>57</sup>See above, at notes 41 and 42.

<sup>58</sup>See, in general, Llinos Beverley Smith, 'Towards a history of women in late medieval Wales', in M. Roberts and S. Clarke (eds), *Women and Gender in Early Modern Wales* (Cardiff, 2000), pp. 14–49; P. J. P. Goldberg, 'Urban identity and the poll taxes of 1377, 1379, and 1381', *Economic History Review*, second ser., 43 (1990), 194–216.

<sup>59</sup>Smith, 'Towards a history of women', pp. 32–3 and sources cited.

<sup>60</sup>Servants are found in rural and urban communities, but a comparison between the town of Ruthin and the commotes of the lordship in the 1390s suggests that those mentioned as servants in the countryside were generally daughters or kin. For brothelkeepers, see, for example, SC2/222/3, m. 135; 223/19, m. 14.

<sup>61</sup>Smith, 'Towards a history of women', p. 36 and sources cited.

<sup>62</sup>Cf. Goldberg, 'Urban identity', on poll tax evidence.

<sup>63</sup>Dimmock, 'Haverfordwest: an exemplar', 19–20; Jones and Owen (eds), *Caernarvon Court Rolls*, passim. For jewellers, ironmongers, cutlers and hatmakers at Ruthin, see SC2/215/64 and passim.

<sup>64</sup>S. Dimmock, 'The origins of Welsh apprentices in sixteenth-century Bristol', *Welsh History Review*, 24 (2008–2009), 116–40; SC2/218/7, m. 3 (1358–1359), contract of apprenticeship ('de prenceshed') with John le Forth, mason, of Ruthin; NLW Wales 20/2, m. 21, contract of apprenticeship with a Beaumaris mercer.

<sup>65</sup>NLW Elwes, 20 (*in vico sementariorum* in Flint); Walker, 'Cardiff', p. 126.

<sup>66</sup>G. E. F. Morgan, 'The vanished tombs of Brecon Cathedral', *Arch. Camb*, 80 (1925), 267; Lewis, *Welsh Monumental Brasses*, p. 40 (Richard Foxwist); *Statutes of the Realm* (London, 1810–1828), I, p. 379 and, for example, SC2/219/1, m. 23; SC2/223/1, mm. 3, 4v (for enactment in Ruthin).

<sup>67</sup>The term *orloes* (F. *horloge*) is also used for a clock in, for example, D. R. Johnston (ed.), *Gwaith Iolo Goch* (Cardiff, 1988), no. 29.18 (a *cywydd* addressed to St David and the city). For record references, see Database Roll 6/2079, 2106 (Thomas le Horloger at Ruthin, 1345–1346); Jones and Owen (eds), *Caernarvon Court Rolls*, p. 115 (John Clocmaker at Caernarfon); NLW Tredegar Park 29/55 (clockhouse at Newport), but the term clock could also signify bells. For Dafydd ap Gwilym's celebrated *cywydd* to the clock, with English



translation and discussion of the problems of location, see R. Bromwich, *Dafydd ap Gwilym: A Selection of Poems* (Llandysul, 1982), pp. 110–12, 123–4. See also G. Rosser, ‘Urban culture and the church 1300–1540’, in Palliser (ed.), *Cambridge Urban History*, I, pp. 344–5. The impression I have formed from a reading of materials such as coroners’ inquests is of an increasing precision in the expression of time by hours from the late fifteenth century, but this deserves further study.

<sup>68</sup>C. Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages: Social Change in England, c.1200–1520* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 188–211; U. Albarella, ‘Meat production and consumption in town and country’, in Giles and Dyer (eds), *Town and Country*, pp. 131–48; A. Caseldine et al., *Environmental Archaeology in Wales* (Lampeter, 1990), pp. 97–103, 105–7 and sources; N. W. Jones et al., ‘Excavations within the medieval town at New Radnor, Powys, 1991–2’, *Archaeological Journal*, 155 (1998), 134–206. I am most grateful to Astrid Caseldine for her help with these matters.

<sup>69</sup>M. Carlin, ‘Fast food and urban living standards in medieval England’, in M. Carlin and J. T. Rosenthal (eds), *Food and Eating in Medieval Europe* (London, 1998), pp. 27–51 (although the emphasis here is on the larger English towns). For piemakers in Welsh towns see, for example, Database 1721 (1320), 2010 (1323) (Felicia le Pymaker at Ruthin), J. Willis-Bund (ed.), *An Extent of All the Lands and Rents of the Lord Bishop of St.David’s ... Usually Called the Black Book of St. David’s* (London, 1902), p. 40 (Henry Pycoker). There are several references to renting of rooms (*camerae*) in medieval Welsh towns.

<sup>70</sup>T. James, ‘Excavations at the Augustinian priory of St John and St Teulyddog, Carmarthen, 1979’, *Arch. Camb.*, 134 (1985), 120–61.

<sup>71</sup>K. Murphy et al., ‘Analysis of a cesspit fill from the Tudor Merchant’s House, Tenby, Dyfed’, *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 36 (1989), 246–62.

<sup>72</sup>For cocket loaves and wastel bread, see J. Davies, ‘Baking for the common good: a reassessment of the assize of bread in medieval England’, *Economic History Review*, 57 (2004), 465–502, especially Table 1; Jones and Owen (eds), *Caernarvon Court Rolls*, p. 26; Database GC1/439 (1313) (wastel bread). For the assize of bread and the *lucrum pistoris* in medieval Wales, see Ellis (ed.), *Record of Caernarvon*, pp. 242–3 and, for example, SC2/219/2, m. 6 (proclamation of assize of bread and beer at Ruthin, 1364–1365). My reading of the line *bara disyml bwrdeisiaidd* in *Gwaith Guto’r Glyn*, no. 108.16, in the context of the broader evidence for bread in the urban environment, suggests an ironic reference to ‘refined, burgess-like bread’. I hope to write on the cultural significance of bread in medieval Wales on another occasion.

<sup>73</sup>For butchers in Ruthin, see SC2/ 215/ 64 and passim. For the meat consumed, including beef and veal (*vitulus*), see, for example, SC2/223/3, m. 1, SC2/223/4, m. 14. The reference to *pesgych Seisnig* (‘fattened English ox’), in contrast to *llwrw pasgiad* (‘in the form of animal-feed’) in Hywel Ystorm’s

satirical *awdl* to Addaf Eurych (Adda the Goldsmith), could refer to the addressee's consumption of animal fodder rather than meat bred for consumption, which is identified as English. For the *awdl*, see Huw M. Edwards (ed.), *Gwaith Prydydd Breuan, Rhys ap Dafydd ab Einion, Hywel Ystorm, a Cherddi Dychan Dienw o Lyfr Coch Hergest* (Aberystwyth, 2000), no. 6.38. I am grateful to Dr Edwards for discussing the point with me, although he bears no responsibility for my interpretation. For evidence of commercial butchery at Monmouth, see A. G. Marvell et al. (eds), *Investigations along Monnow Street, Monmouth*, British Archaeological Reports, British ser. 320 (Oxford, 2001), pp. 113–15.

<sup>74</sup>For the importance of silver spoons amongst other indicia of townsmen's possessions, see P. J. P. Goldberg, 'The fashioning of bourgeois domesticity in later medieval England: a material culture perspective', in Kowaleski and Goldberg (eds), *Medieval Domesticity*, pp. 124–44. There are few surviving Welsh urban wills of sufficient detail (although some contain references to bequests of silver spoons, for example, the will of David Boteler of Monmouth, NLW Badminton 1813), but court rolls sometimes refer to the possession by townspeople of silver spoons and other valuables, for example, SC2/216/5, m. 10; SC2/223/10, m. 11 (theft of silver spoons, and other articles valued at £10); SC2/223/13, m. 3v. See also C/1/1081/6–9 (a schedule of goods in a Brecon town house c.1540).

<sup>75</sup>For contrasting architectural patterns within one town, see, for example, J. Parkhouse and E. Evans (eds), *Excavations in Cowbridge, South Glamorgan, 1977–88*, British Archaeological Reports, British ser. 245 (Oxford, 1996), pp. 241–3. For documentary references, see SC2/223/10, m. 3 (1477–1478, building of house of five couples in Mwrog Street, Ruthin); SC2/222/1, m. 7v (1423–1424, house of three bays with timber for studs to be provided by lord). Tilers and slaters are increasingly mentioned in Ruthin from the second half of the fourteenth century, SC2/223/1, m. 14 recording the removal of tiles (*tegula*) valued at 40s. Slated roofs are, of course, found in rural localities, as literary references to slates (*sglaets*) show.

<sup>76</sup>From among numerous references to the setting of posts and solars in Ruthin, see, for example, SC2/223/1, mm. 11, 14, 16, 24v, 28 (with measurements), 44 (1459–1460).

<sup>77</sup>Riddy, "'Burgeis" domesticity in late-medieval England' (in Kowaleski and Goldberg [eds], *Medieval Domesticity*), pp. 32–6, and on indictments of eavesdroppers and nightstalkers, see, for example, Database D/30 (*vagator* and *ascultator*), D/240.

<sup>78</sup>The single example of a Book of Hours of Welsh provenance known to me, NLW MS 17520A ('The Llanbeblig Hours'), bears the name of Isabella Godynough of Caernarfon. See C. Lloyd-Morgan, 'More written about than writing? Welsh women and the written word', in H. Pryce (ed.), *Literacy in*



*Medieval Celtic Societies* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 153.

## The Townscape, 1400–1600

**Richard Suggett**

*Mutability*

It is the marvellous John Leland, of course, who provides the best – indeed, the only – overview of late medieval Welsh towns and their buildings. Leland is often quoted but I am not sure that we have quite exhausted all that can be extracted from his Itineraries. Leland traversed Wales taking in a range of towns. In the March he contrasted the English towns he knew with those towns ‘built after the Welsh fashion’. Welsh towns included Knighton (‘a praty towne aftar the Walsche building’) and Newtown (‘meately welle buildyd after the Walche fascion’).<sup>1</sup>

What did Leland mean? Were Welsh towns really architecturally distinctive? I think not, although one has to entertain the idea before dismissing it. English and Welsh towns alike had distinctively urban buildings: town halls, storeyed houses, shops, storehouses and so on. Those towns built in the Welsh fashion were small but spacious towns without great spatial constraints in the central marketing area, and without the impressive threestoreyed multi-gabled rows found in the bigger towns. The same might be said of numerous small English towns. Welsh towns were generally small, and not very numerous, but this does not mean that they were unimportant. The smallness of Welsh towns meant that they underwent rather dramatic transformations when assuming their urban functions. Several Welsh towns were said by Leland to be in decay. Old Kidwelly was ‘pretily waullid’ but ‘nere al desolatid’; Pembroke was ‘welle buildyd’, with a suburb almost as big as the old town, but Leland found that much of it was ‘totally yn ruine’, and the decay continued until the end of the century. Speed declared that he saw more uninhabited houses there ‘then I saw bin any one City thorowout my survey’. This was a remarkable observation considering that his atlas contained plans of over seventy cities and shire-towns.<sup>2</sup>

The decay of towns was something of a literary trope illustrating the mutability of the works of mankind. The Roman towns provided the most dramatic examples of change. Caerwent was sometime ‘a fair and a large citey’ but by Leland’s day it was an unimportant agricultural settlement, having fewer than twenty small houses for husbandmen. The decline of towns was attributed to many causes. Destruction during Owain Glyn Dŵr’s revolt explained the desolation of several towns: Montgomery (‘deflorichid’), New Radnor (‘partely destroyed’), and Hay within the walls (‘wonderfully decaied’).<sup>3</sup> Leland was

perplexed by the decline of the old town at Denbigh: 'wither it were by fier or for lak of water . . . or for lak of good caryage into the toun, standing sumwhat high and on rokky ground, I cannot surely telle.' The decline of trade led to the decay of some inland towns, notably in Monmouthshire where Grosmont and Trelech shrank to villages. There were catastrophic fires in the timber towns of Wales and the March. Wrexham accidentally burnt just before winter 1462. In 1468, Denbigh was deliberately fired by the earl of Pembroke, and Edward IV granted 1,500 marks towards its repair. Fires were numerous, and it was unsurprising that Leland encountered one town – Kidwelly – where part of the suburb, presumably timber-built, had just been burnt.<sup>4</sup>

Despite all of this, surviving buildings suggest that many towns were experiencing a revival. Presteigne was in effect refounded by Bishop Martin of St Davids (1482–3), who secured market privileges for the town, which became a prosperous corn market for the surrounding lordships; the surviving fifteenth-century houses certainly reflect this prosperity. Dereliction was not always what it seemed. At its most striking, derelict old towns coexisted with flourishing new towns. At Denbigh, the old walled town declined as its suburb flourished. Leland found Denbigh new town three times as big as the old town, which for the most was decayed ('doone'). No fifteenth-century houses have yet been identified in the new town, and the architectural evidence supports Leland's contention that Denbigh's extra-mural new town was 'totally made of later tyme'. Carmarthen's new town grew at the expense of Kidwelly in the sixteenth century, though Kidwelly's new town was still judged three times bigger than the old walled town.<sup>5</sup>

Dereliction was a symptom not of general economic decline, but rather of regional restructuring in which there were winners and losers. Several Welsh towns were included in the Henrician act (1544) which empowered towns to rebuild the derelict properties of private owners. This post-Act of Union legislation (which followed two previous acts) probably expressed the desire for redevelopment and modernization rather than actual situations of acute dereliction, and it is unclear if corporations ever used these new powers. The accurate dating of buildings by dendrochronology shows that new urban buildings of different type steadily accumulated in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (see Appendix at the end of the chapter). So much so, indeed, that many towns seem to have been virtually rebuilt, in the process erasing their earlier medieval buildings. The absence of any pre-1400 domestic buildings – except at basement level – is particularly striking, especially as the first half of the fourteenth century seems to have been a period of investment in domestic buildings in many parts of England. Church and castle were generally the only pre-1400 structures remaining in the sixteenth-century Welsh town, but most churches had been reconstructed while, for the most part, castles were allowed to decay.<sup>6</sup>

The decay of castles was deplored by Thomas Churchyard in the

mid-sixteenth century, but it was an inevitable consequence of the Act of Union. Castles lost their care and maintenance as the remaining garrisons were reduced and withdrawn. Garrisons were resented partly because they were reminders of occupation and oppression but also because they were paid for by levies imposed on the towns. Tensions between the country and the garrisons could result in skirmishes. A mid-fifteenth-century affray at Beaumaris fair between the garrison and the men of Anglesey resulted in many deaths, and was mythologized as the 'Black Affray' (*Y Ffrae Du*). The castletowns were inevitably associated historically with conquest and oppression. The decline of the castle was inseparable from a general sense that the Welsh had taken over the towns. This was strongly expressed by Hugh Thomas, who saw it as God's judgement that families of English name and descent had so declined in Brecon that there were scarcely any remaining among the 400 families in the late-seventeenth-century town.<sup>7</sup>

The Welsh town of the Acts of Union was in building terms essentially a new town. The streets and plots may have been inherited from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries but the buildings belonged to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Some remarkable poetry praises particular towns in general terms for their situation, religious institutions, shops, markets and burgesses. These urban eulogies are a striking expression of Welsh admiration for the late medieval town, but words could not do justice to all the buildings of a town. Towns had to be appreciated by the eye. Rice Merrick praised the 'many fair and large' streets and buildings of Cardiff but forbore describing them because he intended to depict the town 'by card' or chart, that is, by a perspective view. These were, of course, provided by Speed in his atlas, the *Theatre of the Empire of Great Britaine* (1612). Speed's town plans gave bird's-eye views of the urban landscape, not only the rows of houses with the marketplace at their centre, but also the walls, bridges and gates, the streets and lanes with surprising numbers of gardens, the churches and public buildings, and incidental detail of great value for understanding the town as place of entertainment and punishment – the maypole, the stocks and the gallows. These minor structures were important aspects of the townscape and are described here. Towns also had to be appreciated by the ear, and perhaps the nose, as well as the eye. Aural delights included the sounds of town waits and of bells, increasingly heard on secular occasions. Many of these sounds were linked to the growing importance of civic ceremonial in the shire towns. The town was also a place where knowing the time mattered – public clocks and dials were an urban necessity.<sup>8</sup>

Valuable attention has been paid to the ranking by size of Welsh towns, but this has tended to obscure the way in which the population of towns fluctuated extraordinarily. Small Welsh towns tended to serve larger hinterlands than their English counterparts. They were not only marketing centres but also judicial centres, and the focus of a festive culture. Towns may have been small but they were transformed during the sessions, markets, fairs and wakes, as the country

took over the town. Towns were vessels that filled and emptied according to the dynamic of these occasions. During markets and sessions towns might suddenly double or treble in size as buyers and sellers, as well as litigants, poured into the Welsh towns from their vast hinterlands.<sup>9</sup>

This phenomenon of dramatic but temporary expansion was still striking in the eighteenth-century town. A Georgian tourist recorded that he tried to pass through Builth on a market day, but:

Our ride through the crowds in the street was attended with some difficulty. It at first amazed us, to see the fullness of these weekly meetings in such little towns, as they appeared more like large fairs, than common markets; the houses were not sufficient to contain the people who thronged to them, nor the stables their horses. We could scarcely conceive, from the general wildness of the country, that it could have possibly produced such numerous assemblies, but as the towns in Wales are rare, their markets are attended from villages and hamlets, at a considerable distances for no shops are to be found in the parishes, nor are the smallest trifles to be purchased, except in the towns.<sup>10</sup>

#### *Trading: marketplaces*

Towns were bounded in ways that were generally obvious, defining who belonged and who did not, which contributed to a sense of urban consciousness. Not all towns were walled but a considerable number were, and Tenby, Conwy and Caernarfon today give a good sense of the compactness of the walled and gated town. Towns without walls maintained a 'bar' or gate, as at Ruthin, whose effect was the same as the gates of walled towns. The Act of Union may have prompted repairs and enhancements to the walls and gates of some of the new shire towns. Some refortifications occurred during the alarms in the war with Spain, as at Tenby, and a mudwall was thrown up at Beaumaris, probably during the Spanish wars. However, town walls were hardly serious defensive structures after 1500. Rather, they symbolized that towns were bounded communities in which some people were privileged and others not.<sup>11</sup>

Towns were essentially trading communities and markets were central to a town, often literally so. Three or four roads, often called market ways, converged on the marketplace with its market hall, a distinctive urban building. At Llanidloes, the principal streets intersected at a timber-framed markethall, the only one of its type left in Wales, which still stands at the crossroads (see [Figure 3.1](#)). Machynlleth had a T-plan with three streets named after the countrymen who came along these streets to the central market: Stryd Gwŷr Gwynedd, Stryd Gwŷr Deheubarth, and Stryd Gwŷr Cyfeiliog, that is, the streets of the men of Gwynedd (north), Deheubarth (west) and Cyfeiliog (east). Some markets had moved from the confines of the old walled town to the suburbs, for example at Haverfordwest and Denbigh. The configuration of the marketing space varied. Many were broad high streets; some were rectangular or

triangular. Denbigh had a fair and large market-place, lately paved (in the 1530s) and otherwise well-built. Brecon, too, in 1521 was ‘well built’ and ‘well paved’.<sup>12</sup>



Figure 3.1 Market Hall, Llanidloes. A sixteenth-century timber-framed courthouse raised over the market space, rebuilt 1612–22.

Crown copyright: RCAHMW.

Haverfordwest had one of the more diffuse markets. The trading area formed a busy triangle of streets around St Mary’s Church. Haverfordwest’s market was memorably described as one of the ‘greatest and plentifullest’ markets in Wales. The provisions sold there included meat, domestic birds and wildfowl, besides vegetables and corn, and for fish ‘it passeth all others in Wales’. Many ‘marvelled that the victuals seen at noon should be shifted away ere night’. How was all this organized? The market was not a planned architectural space but a kind of ordered anarchy where stalls for different kinds of produce had established niches. There were few permanent buildings beyond the meat shambles under the Guildhall and a corn-market of uncertain date (rebuilt in 1701). The fish market was simply a low flagged wall provided with a pent roof, obscurely called ‘Penniless Bench’. The market was primarily the booths and stalls which filled the streets around the church and spilled into the churchyard.<sup>13</sup>

Booths and stalls were temporary shops erected for the duration of markets and fairs. Poles and boards served as the framework for stalls at Llandaf fair,

famous for special blue cheeses. The timber framework of the more permanent booths had a prominent cross-beam or 'baulk' from which a show of wares was made. The regulations of the Haverfordwest company of feltmakers, hatters and haberdashers specifically mention the practice. These booths were covered by cloth awnings, possibly striped sackcloth of the type stolen from a booth in Carmarthenshire in 1559.<sup>14</sup> Semi-permanent booths developed into lock-up shops and more elaborate storeyed shops with external steps to first-floor chambers. This seems to have been the origin of the Back and Front Short Row in the middle of High Street, Haverfordwest, which had steps ('pairs of stairs') in the street. Some market infills developed into more substantial rows, as in Denbigh, where Shop Row (between High Street and Back Row) has shops-and-dwellings surviving from the earlier sixteenth century.<sup>15</sup>

All towns had a cross, often several crosses, in the market areas. The earliest surviving market-cross in Wales is at Grosmont (Monmouthshire), where the fourteenth-century cross base decorated with quatrefoils is evidence of the original trading ambitions of this borough, which subsequently languished. Most crosses were renewed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Few have survived, but they are depicted on Speed's plans of the Welsh towns. The principal crosses were usually called the 'high-cross' and the 'market-cross'. The market-cross was an open-sided but covered place topped by a cross which provided shelter for those trading in particular goods. Market-crosses, sometimes called butter or poultry crosses, were quite common in the south and west of England and their distribution extended into south Wales. In Cardiff, the market-cross protected the corn market. It was a 'fair cross' in the middle of the crossroads by the guildhall, 'quadrant', that is, square, and probably with pillars at the corners, and with a leaded roof supported by joists ('geasts').<sup>16</sup>

The high-cross was set on a stepped platform and commanded the high street or market. It was an unmistakable landmark and innumerable bargains, deals and meetings took place there. Written agreements frequently specified that goods had to be delivered, or money paid, at the high-cross, and might involve considerable sums. The high-cross was eventually dismantled or adapted in the early-modern town. At Ruthin, the old cross in the market square became 'decayed and in a ruinous condition' and was taken down in 1759. The following year, in Denbigh, the shaft of the cross was adapted as a column some seven feet high terminating in a ball and set on a stepped base.<sup>17</sup>

It was from the high-cross that proclamations were made, often mundane but sometimes extraordinary. Announcements were regularly made from the high-cross about lost or stolen goods, as they were in churches. Solemn proclamations were made at the cross about succession to the throne, although distance from London sometimes meant that the news was confused. Queen Mary was proclaimed both traitor and lawful queen on the same day at Denbigh and on consecutive days at Beaumaris. It was usual to make



proclamations in Welsh and in English. The accession of James I was proclaimed in the market at Denbigh by the mayor in English and in Welsh by Bishop Morgan.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to the high-cross, many markets had a special stone where bargains were concluded. There are numerous references in agreements to the 'great stone' in High Street, Cardiff. This landmark was lost during nineteenth-century redevelopment but similar stones have survived in other market towns. Another prominent stone, one of several large quartz boulders, has given its name to Maen Gwyn Street in Machynlleth. At Ruthin, 'Maen Huail', a rough limestone block, remains on the west side of the market and was similarly referred to as the 'great stone' in economic agreements. The name, which recalls an Arthurian warrior, seems to be a relatively recent antiquarian invention. It is called 'Maen Heol' by Edward Lhuyd, who found it a 'flat stone in the middle of the street'. The older inhabitants still looked upon this 'rude block' with 'a degree of reverence and admiration' in the nineteenth-century town. These landmarks were unadorned stones of uncertain origin, but, like the famous London Stone, acquired great significance, symbolizing the trading history of a town because of their use in innumerable bargains.<sup>19</sup>

Regulation of the market was set out in a town's ordinances and enforced by the clerk of the market and other officials. These officers policed the market, collected the tolls, and kept the true weights and measures. The survival of a few vulnerable paper toll books reveals that the sphere of influence of a market might reach many miles into the surrounding countryside.<sup>20</sup> In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, weights and measures were often customary and specific to a particular market town, with trading agreements carefully specifying which measures were to be used. The island of Anglesey was split between those parts using the Beaumaris measures and those parts using the mainland Caernarfon measure. In the seventeenth century, there was government pressure to replace provincial measures with the standard Winchester measures. It was a long process, as recurring presentments at the Great Sessions show, and standardization was not achieved until the eighteenth century. The standardization of weights and measures was of course part of the process of making the inhabitants of provincial towns into Britons.<sup>21</sup>

#### *Government: shire hall and town hall*

The most significant public building in the town was the town hall, and this public hall generally occupied the centre of the central market space. This building was the focus of the administrative and judicial functions of a town's officers. It is necessary to distinguish between town halls (or market halls or booth-halls) and shire halls, although the terms were somewhat interchangeable. A single building might combine both functions, but many shire towns had two public halls, the town hall and the shire hall. The town hall was where the business of the town was conducted and had a close



connection with the market. The shire hall was where the business of the county was done, especially the sessions, both quarter-sessions and assizes.

A consequence of the Act of Union was the construction of shire halls for the new assizes or great sessions. Initially, at least, the sessions were held in the royal castles. The great hall at Monmouth Castle was maintained for the assize judges into the seventeenth century, although the castle was otherwise 'ruinous and in decay'. Some new shire halls were built within castle enclaves. Speed's map of Cardiff shows the shire hall within the outer bailey of the castle and the town hall in the marketplace outside the castle walls. The new shire hall for Anglesey was built in 1614 in the shadow of Beaumaris Castle.<sup>22</sup> The shire hall was in some ways the successor of earlier courthouses in towns which had served the surrounding lordships, as, for example, at Cardiff, Ruthin and Holt. Remarkably, the courthouse for the lordship of Dyffryn Clwyd has survived, and stands in the market place at Ruthin ([Figure 3.2](#)). It is a four-bay timber-framed range with wall-framing of large two-tier panels with curving up-braces. It is essentially a ground-floor hall with restrained but characteristic decoration: the trusses are cusped at the apex and there are cusped windbraces. The Old Court House at Ruthin has the distinction of being the oldest dated urban public building in Wales, and was built from timber felled in spring 1421. This courthouse must have marked renewed confidence in the lordship after the end of Owain Glyn Dŵr's revolt. In Denbigh, similarly, a new courthouse was built to replace the hall burnt during the revolt. The restoration of authority in the lordship meant the restoration of the sessions and courts suspended during the revolt.<sup>23</sup>



Figure 3.2 Old Courthouse, Ruthin. The timber-framed courthouse for Dyffryn Clwyd lordship was built in 1421 after Owain Glyn Dŵr's revolt.

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Shire halls were usually ground-floor halls. By contrast, town halls were generally first-floor halls raised on timber pillars with a market space on the arcaded ground floor. This distinctive timber-arcaded building type became widespread in the Welsh towns in the sixteenth century, replacing (especially in the castle-towns) the older type of guildhall built over the principal gateway, as at Kidwelly and Denbigh, or stone-vaulted town halls. Many town halls in England and Wales were reconstructed in a spate of rebuilding between 1575 and 1625. The timber-framed 'market-hall' at Llanidloes ([Figure 3.1](#)), with a first-floor courthouse raised on timber piers, exemplifies the characteristic post-Act of Union town hall, and also (unexpectedly) the process of rebuilding. Examination of the town hall at Llanidloes shows that it incorporates material from more than one building phase. The great posts are earlier than the superstructure, and it seems that the hall was built in the later sixteenth century (replacing an earlier structure) and again reconstructed in the early seventeenth century.<sup>24</sup>

Town halls became increasingly elaborate, both architecturally and in terms of their plan. The dignity of a town demanded an imposing courthouse, and private citizens might contribute substantially towards rebuilding town halls. In 1571, Philip Jones, a London mercer, funded the rebuilding of Monmouth's market hall and courthouse. The building was raised on eight stone pillars but

it is unclear if the superstructure was also stone-built. Jones was to bequeath money for rebuilding Abergavenny market-house in the same style. A particularly ambitious timber guildhall was built by John Abel at Brecon in 1624. The columned ground floor served as a corn-market. The hall and council chamber on the first floor were lit by mullioned-and-transomed windows in three cross-gables. In the lofts above the hall there was an armoury. Mottoes in Latin and English and a large sundial graced the main front of the building.<sup>25</sup>

John Abel's masterpiece was one of the last great timber town halls. The seventeenth-century trend was to rebuild timber halls in stone and brick, although the process was prolonged. The first stone-built halls belong to the later sixteenth century. Monmouth (perhaps only partly stone-built) and Denbigh were virtually contemporary. Denbigh's hall was built through the patronage of Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, who was granted the lordship of Denbigh in 1563. In a letter to the Denbighshire justices in March 1572, Leicester urged construction of a shire hall (which the officers and inhabitants of the town wanted) and made a gift of the site. The building was certainly completed by 1575, as Speed records the tradition that the shire-hall bell tolled twice during the earthquake of that year. This remarkable building seems to have combined the functions of town hall and shire hall and was raised over an arcaded market. It may originally have had crenellations and emblematic statuary like the broadly contemporary town hall at Shrewsbury.<sup>26</sup>

It was logical to combine the functions of shire hall and town hall in one building, as at Denbigh and Brecon, and these splendid buildings were paid for jointly by town and county. The shire hall seems to have had little formal use outside the sessions. However, for some games players the empty courthouse was an irresistible covered space. Tennis players who persistently invaded the shire hall at Brecon, smashing some of the hall windows, were bound over by the town magistrates to answer at the following sessions held in the same hall.<sup>27</sup>

The sessions, like the fairs and markets, attracted numerous people to the town. The assizes were remarkable in the way they increased the population of a town with the officers of the court and all those obliged to give attendance, the prisoners, those bailed to appear, the jurors and litigants. Many hundreds of people were involved, who had to be fed and found accommodation and therefore spent money in the town. Holding the sessions was therefore a prize that towns competed for, sometimes indulging in expensive machinations. In 1584–5, the burgesses of Caernarfon promoted a parliamentary bill that would have transferred the quarter sessions (which alternated with Conwy) to their town alone.<sup>28</sup>

Town hall and shire hall provided the focus for urban ceremonial. The assizes were preceded, as in England, by ceremonial which welcomed the judges in their scarlet robes as representatives of royal justice. They were met

at the shire boundary by the sheriff's men and escorted to the shire town where the assizes were to be held and where they were entertained by the mayor and corporation.<sup>29</sup> Ceremonial served to emphasize the separate jurisdictions of crown and town. In Pembrokeshire, the absence of a shire hall forced the judges to sit in Haverfordwest town hall. Nevertheless, the sessions for the county were separately proclaimed on the castle green and judgments formally pronounced there. At Carmarthen, another town with the status of a county, the dignity of the town-and-county was signalled by the corporation sword of justice, which was apparently first carried in procession in 1545.<sup>30</sup>

### *Punishment and prisons*

Prisoners were, of course, the unwilling participants in the sessions. All towns had their gaols but they were not necessarily very significant buildings since most prisoners were held for only a short time, awaiting trial or punishment. The town prison was commonly sited under the town hall in a cage, conveniently holding prisoners who would be tried in the hall above. Beneath Cardiff's town hall was the prison where 'offenders and misdoers' were committed, which was uninvitingly called the 'Cwchmoel' or 'bare cell' in Welsh, and the 'Cockmarel' in English. Town prisons might be regarded as nuisances because of the uncomfortable proximity of prisoners and townsfolk. In Haverfordwest, there were complaints that prisoners, confined to the upper and lower floors in the 'Cockhouse', regularly threw filth into the street.<sup>31</sup>

Shire gaols were generally housed in the increasingly dilapidated royal castles. At Denbigh, for example, the Burgess' Tower was adapted as a prisonhouse, but the castle was in some places unsafe, and quarried for stone, lead and other materials. In 1578, a prisoner escaping from the prison ('Briges Towr') added insult to injury by making off with an iron bar and lump of lead. Severe dilapidations at Beaumaris Castle forced the sheriff to abandon the county gaol and accommodate prisoners in various town-houses before a new prison was built. Gaolers were responsible to the sheriff and their performance bonds convey the extent of their duties.<sup>32</sup> There are dispiriting but interesting lists of the fetters and shackles used to secure prisoners, including 'the greate bolte' familiarly called Gwennllian Hir by prisoners at New Radnor Castle.<sup>33</sup> It was unusual for a prisoner to spend a prolonged period (more than several months) in the shire gaol. Suspects who were not bailable awaited trial at the next sessions; after trial prisoners were discharged or sentenced.

The departure of the royal judges left convicted prisoners in the town awaiting punishment. Punishments were intended to be public and exemplary, and were laid down by statute. Prisoners convicted of non-capital felonies might be whipped at the cart's tail. The cart conveyed those convicted of capital felonies to the accustomed places of execution outside the town gates. The gallows and gibbet were reminders to all those entering a town that it was place of royal justice and of life and death.<sup>34</sup> The stocks and pillory were sited

in the market-place, and those pilloried sometimes had papers pinned to their breasts naming their offences. Occasionally, capital punishment took place within the town. The executions of the Catholic and Protestant martyrs were terrible demonstrations of the power of the state and seem to have been carried out in the marketplace. Bishop Ferrar was certainly burnt in Carmarthen market-place, 'where ye conduit is'.<sup>35</sup>

Although imprisonment was not generally a statutory punishment, incarceration was seen as a solution to the problem of vagrancy and found architectural expression in houses of correction. The county bridewells or houses of correction are of particular interest since many were purpose-built structures. Legislation in 1576 and 1597 and afterwards ordered the setting up of houses of correction in all counties to punish and reform incorrigible vagrants. Presentments at the assizes show that it took several years before houses of correction were established in many counties.<sup>36</sup> It is probable that most bridewells were straightforward structures and sited on the periphery of towns, though none are identified on Speed's town plans. The layout of most bridewells would have included the master's lodgings, the inmates' lodgings and workhouse, and the yard with whipping-post and stocks.

Those classified as rogues, vagabonds and beggars were wanderers of many kinds. Prisoners at the Haverfordwest bridewell included six musicians in 1620 and several recusants in 1626;<sup>37</sup> for a time the house of correction may have resembled a minstrels' academy and a seminary. Rogues and vagabonds included musicians, quack-doctors, pedlars, tinkers and petty chapmen, many of whom gave colour and excitement to the town, and performed useful but unacknowledged services. Vagabonds were discouraged from settling in towns, partly because, like other paupers, they were viewed as a potential drain on a town's resources. An interesting crop of prosecutions relate to the conversion of houses into rooms and cottages for transients: an early instance of complaints about multiple occupancy. As a Wrexham presentment bluntly put it, vagabonds bred children who would become chargeable to the town. There was hostility towards vagabonds because they were associated with disorder and crime and were therefore a threat to the moral fabric of the town. They were also regarded as a threat to the physical fabric of the town. Lunatics and vengeful rogues were associated with arson. In 1665, a distracted man was secured in Ruthin's prison (the 'blackchamber') 'lest [he] set fire to houses'. In 1674, a wanderer and sturdy beggar, Evan ap Richard, was committed to the Denbighshire House of Correction after he had 'resolved to doe mischief', threatening to burn a house and to destroy himself. Arson seems to have been a common enough urban threat. William George of Wrexham, a carpenter, threatened to 'fire the towne of Wrexham'. Yet more graphic was the accusation that Robert Hughes of Wrexham 'did burn Ruthin and fled by the light thereof'. Arson was, of course, viewed with particular horror in the timber-built towns of Wales and the March.<sup>38</sup>

Travellers and townsfolk alike needed refreshment and entertainment, and sometimes accommodation, and alehouses providing these services were ubiquitous in towns. Alehouses were an urban necessity but they were associated with drunkenness, illicit games, vagabonds and other suspect persons, theft and violence. Concern about disorderly alehouses created something of a moral panic in the mid-Elizabethan period. In 1577, the Privy Council ordered what was in effect a national survey of inns, taverns and alehouses. In Wales, this was organized through the Council in the Marches, which required the Welsh justices to examine all alehouse-keepers and to certify the number of licensed alehouses. The figures for several Welsh counties have survived. Those for Carmarthen are the most revealing because the borough is distinguished from the county. These show that 31 of 149 Carmarthenshire alehouses (about one-fifth) were located in the shire town, a clear demonstration that alehouses were very much an urban phenomenon. In Anglesey, the proportion was even greater, with more than a quarter of the county's alehouses concentrated in Beaumaris along with the island's only taverns.<sup>39</sup>



Figure 3.3 The Bull Hotel, Denbigh: gabled elevation from the yard.

Crown copyright: RCAHMW.

The census discriminated between inns, taverns and alehouses, distinctions that need some explanation today. Inns were large, urban establishments offering accommodation, stabling and related activities. Taverns sold wine and

were by and large patronized by the more affluent townsfolk. Alehouses offered ale, of course, but often much more, and ranged from common alehouses to high-status establishments. Inns were not particularly numerous in Welsh towns. There were four or five inns in Carmarthen but only one in New Radnor, according to the 1577 census. Some inns probably corresponded to the great courtyard and galleried establishments of the prosperous English towns, as is suggested by the name of the 'Great Ostry' [= hostelry] in Cardiff.<sup>40</sup> The only surviving pre-Restoration inn is The Bull Hotel, Denbigh, the former Guildhall Tavern (Figure 3.3). This large, three-storey, early-seventeenth-century inn presented triple gables to the street and still preserves the brewhouse in the rear yard. The original plan is difficult to recover, but it is notable for having a corner well-stair with successive newelposts strikingly carved with gloved hands (Figure 3.4). This motif may have been a compliment to the dominant glovers' guild in Denbigh (who perhaps met in an upper room), or to the Myddelton family whose badge was a hand, but it may also have been a version of the painted or carved hand advertising that drink was for sale. Chester magistrates had directed in 1573 that 'the sign of a hand made of wood' was to advertise the alehouse in the city.<sup>41</sup>





Figure 3.4 The Bull Hotel, Denbigh: the stair with gloved hand.  
Crown copyright: RCAHMW.

Most towns had several taverns. Wine had to be imported, of course, and many port-towns had a flourishing wine trade with France and Portugal. Taverns were sometimes affected by an uncertain supply of wine. Beaumaris's two taverns were said to retail wine 'when they can get any', but for the majority of the year they were 'destitute'. Shortage of supply might lead to exorbitant prices. In 1576, the Breconshire grand jury (probably disgruntled customers) made a presentment of two taverners in the town who sold wine

above the prices limited by statute, viz. 'the seck at xd the quartte and gascoyne wyne at viiid the quartt'.<sup>42</sup> Taverns needed cellars to store their wine and keep it at a constant temperature. Some drinking may have been done in these cellars as well as in the rooms above. Two very splendid cellars survive, in Haverfordwest and Chepstow, which are far from utilitarian and may well have been associated with taverns. The Chepstow cellar has distinctive bosses at the intersection of the ribbed (quadripartite) vaulting which suggest that it was a wine-vault. One boss is carved with intertwined vines; another has a foliate head ('green man') with protruding tongue that may represent the bibulous Bacchus.<sup>43</sup> These vaults are among the earliest surviving urban structures, dating from the fourteenth century or before, but their superstructures, probably timber-built, have disappeared.

Alehouses were the most numerous type of drinking establishment, and some may have appropriated the functions of tavern and inn. A fairly strict system of licensing in the later sixteenth century suppressed the smaller, unlicensed alehouse. Increasing regulation helped establish the respectable licensed alehouse as a distinctive building type. Externally, alehouses were traditionally distinguished by an ale-stake (or ale-pole) set above the doorway, but the ale-stake gave way to painted red-and-white chequers and other more specific signs. Alehouses were places where business was done, and agreements often specified that a transaction was to take place at an alehouse with a particular sign. Alehouses were named from the later sixteenth century, and alehouse signs became ubiquitous and may have included carvings as well as painted signboards.<sup>44</sup> An early sign surviving at the Green House (Y Tŷ Gwyrdd), Llantarnam, advertised the basic requirements of an alehouse. The enticing sign shows two customers taking their ease, one smoking a pipe. On the table before them are a rummer and a handled mug with a candlestick. The inscription, dated 1719, reads 'Cwrw da / A seidir i chwi. Dewch y mewn / Chwi gewch y profi', which may be loosely translated as 'Good beer and cider for you; come in and try them.'<sup>45</sup>

The substantial alehouse had several requirements. Besides cellar and kitchen, vital features of the alehouse included fireplaces in the public rooms and ready access to the drinking rooms. A building type emerges which was well represented in the rows of the marketplaces. It has a through- or sidepassage, ideally with front and back doors for easy access and (occasionally hasty) egress; furtive use of the back door was the subject of contemporary comment. Rooms with fireplaces were conveniently reached from this through-passage rather than arranged as intercommunicating chambers. These ground-floor rooms were conventionally hall, kitchen and parlour with stair alongside, but all could function as drinking- and eating-rooms. An offset stair (which did not impede the passage) led to the first-floor chambers which might serve as additional drinking rooms. Urban buildings of this type continue or continued until recently as public houses in (for example) Swansea (The Cross Keys, see

Figure 3.5), Cowbridge (The Bear), Denbigh (the former Talbot Inn), and Presteigne (The Duke's Arms).<sup>46</sup>



Figure 3.5 The Cross Keys Inn, Swansea: a medieval range adapted as an alehouse in the seventeenth century. Several doors provide access to the drinking rooms. Crown copyright: RCAHMMW.

Alehouses were inseparable from gaming: cards, dice and tables, the subject of regular presentments at the quarter sessions and assizes. Besides, the alehouse was associated with ball games, notably bowling and tennis, which required special courts or ranges. Purpose-built bowling alleys were found in the Welsh towns. Three bowling alleys in Hay and Brecon, one within the

castle, were presented at the assizes in 1576, and another alley ‘with scales to play’ at Builth was presented in 1581.<sup>47</sup> These alleys were presumably (as in London) timber-framed ranges with open upper panels to light the play. Cock-fighting became an established recreation in the later sixteenth century and required specially constructed cock-pits. A cock-pit survived behind the Hawk and Buckle public house in Denbigh until dismantled and removed to St Fagans.<sup>48</sup>

### *Merchants, mercers and shops*

The town’s freemen were traders and there was no clear separation between domestic and commercial buildings. Where the pressure on space was at its greatest, around the market-place, there were distinctively urban buildings which combined dwelling, workshop and shop in multi-gabled rows. Jettied buildings with gables facing the street survive here and there in splendid but rather incongruous isolation in the modern Welsh town. Newport’s three-storey Murenger House (53 High Street) is a rather fine but solitary jettied house presumably once an unexceptional high-status dwelling in the town. Haverfordwest preserves a pair of rather disguised jettied houses near the church, now somewhat surprising in this stone-built town but timberfronted houses were once characteristic of the market area. A particularly interesting group has survived in Beaumaris on the corner of Church Street and High Street, near the former high-cross which may be considered the social and marketing centre of the town. The diversity of the Beaumaris group shows the way in which development occurred piecemeal, producing rather splendid buildings of different styles from the mid-fifteenth to the mid-sixteenth centuries, and were characteristically occupied by traders of different type.

The Beaumaris group is of exceptional interest, not only for their variety but also because their occupants can be identified from an Elizabethan (1586) rental; usually town-houses are a documentary blank. According to Sir John Wynn of Gwydir, Beaumaris was proverbial for its merchants, as Caernarfon was for its lawyers and Conwy for its gentlemen, and merchants were certainly among the occupiers of these houses.<sup>49</sup> The George and Dragon (Church Street) is an elaborately jettied townhouse set parallel to the street and adjacent to Hen Blas, the townhouse of the Bulkeley family (Figure 3.6). The jetty and close studding added swagger to the street front; the rear jetty was functional and supported a gallery which provided independent access to the first-floor chambers in the manner of an inn (Figure 3.6). The house was built in 1541, and in the later sixteenth century was a merchant’s house belonging to Thomas Johnson. The principal first-floor chamber retains an elaborate wall-painting with religious emblems, Latin mottoes, and – most revealingly – twice displaying the merchant’s mark of its owner (Figure 3.7). Between the George and Dragon and the parish church lay Hen Blas (Figure 3.8), the large courtyard mansion built by Sir Richard Bulkeley (d. 1546/7). Hen Blas was set back from the street and fronted by several shops – a characteristic urban

grouping. In 1586, Hugh Ingram had a little tailor's shop by the gate to the stable yard, and Richard Tyler, glover, had another small shop there. On the other side of the George and Dragon was the prime corner site with Castle Street. Corner houses were often deliberately eye-catching, and 34 Castle Street was originally elaborately timber-framed. It was refronted in the nineteenth century but the surviving late-fifteenth-century trusses are elaborately finished with decorative bosses, which include the double (Tudor) rose carved on timber felled in winter 1482/3. The 1586 rental shows that the cellar was separately rented by Rowland Bulkeley, styled merchant, one of the numerous sons of Richard Bulkeley of Hen Blas. The adjacent property was a large house of five bays and kitchen with a court ('backside') tenanted by Elyn Johnson (perhaps the mother of Thomas Johnson). It was fronted by several small shops, each with a piece of paved ground (tenanted by Meredith Fletcher, John Sadler, and Rauf Goodman), with a 'little corner' held separately. The shops were small, with frontages of only 7½, 4, and 3½ yards and a depth of 8½ yards. This range has now been rebuilt, but further along the High Street towards the Castle a similar timber-framed house (now called The Tudor Rose) survives. The rear wing is a substantial and elaborate smoke-blackened fifteenth-century hall which was floored over in 1540. A cross-wing parallel to the street with decorative 'herring-bone' framing was built in 1485/6. The first-floor solar was reached from the hall by cantilevered steps. The ground-floor rooms below the solar appear to have been separate commercial premises with (mortices show) little shops fronting the street.<sup>50</sup>

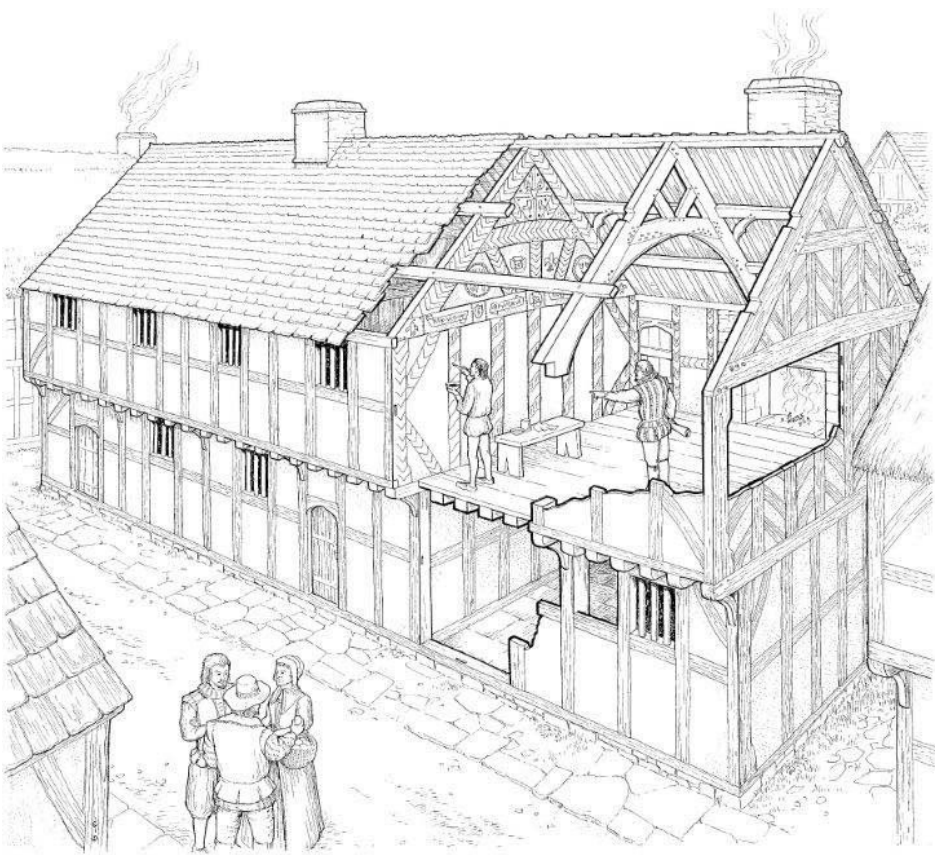


Figure 3.6 George & Dragon Hotel, Beaumaris: a jettied, timber-framed merchant's house built in 1541. The cutaway drawing shows the painted first-floor chamber. Copyright: Paul Davies.





Figure 3.7 George & Dragon Hotel, Beaumaris: section showing the front and rear jetties, and the first-floor wallpainting. The merchant's marks incorporated in the painting should be noted. Crown copyright: RCAHMW.



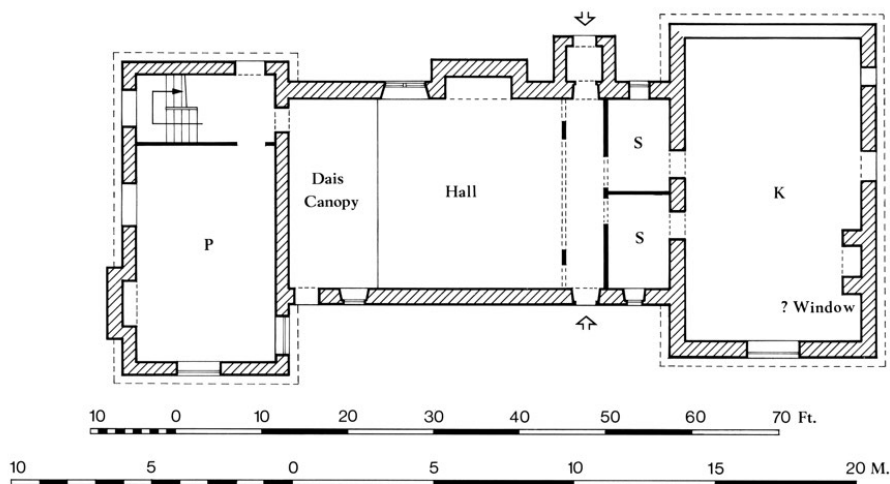


Figure 3.8 Hen Blas, Beaumaris: a late-medieval H-plan gentry house with its stone-built successor behind it. Crown copyright: RCAHMW.

The Beaumaris group illustrates several well-defined urban building types: the courtyard house, the open hall set at right angles to the street but fronted by shops, and the fully-storeyed urban house. It was unusual to find open halls in the commercial area of the sixteenth-century town. The date of the storeyed George and Dragon (1541) and the flooring over of the hall of the Tudor Rose (1549) suggest that the urban open hall was obsolete by the mid-sixteenth century.

The prime urban locations adjacent to the market and quay were often

occupied by merchants' and mercers' houses which combined business and domestic accommodation. Merchants were essentially wholesalers, and cellars and basements provided storage for traded commodities. The stone-vaulted, fire-proof basement is very much a feature of domestic architecture in Haverfordwest and Pembroke. Further storage was available on the quaysides in storehouses and cellars. Port towns were entrepôts with merchants dealing in goods brought from the surrounding countryside and destined for export. In Cardiff, for example, large quantities of bar-iron, grain, and salted butter in casks were temporarily stored before export to Bristol.<sup>51</sup>

Aberconwy House, Conwy, is the earliest complete townhouse in Wales, and its plan and situation suggest that it was a merchant's house. Aberconwy House is prominently located on a corner site at the intersection of two principal streets (High and Castle Streets) within the walled town (Figure 3.9). Indeed, it was the first substantial house encountered when entering the town through the gateway (Porth Isaf) from the quay. The timber house is raised over a stone basement built into the rising ground behind. Corner sites were exploited for display, and Aberconwy House was deliberately eye-catching with lavish jettying of the upper storey. Jettying brings forward the upper storey on projecting beams which are supported at intervals by brackets. At Aberconwy House, the decorative possibilities of jettying are exploited to the full by providing every projecting beam with a jetty-bracket. The effect is extraordinary (and not recorded elsewhere), and rather reminiscent of a great ship dropping anchor in the street.



Figure 3.9 Aberconwy House, Conwy: a jettied merchant's house with trading basement, tree-ring dated 1420. Crown copyright: RCAHMW.

The phasing of Aberconwy House was uncertain before tree-ring dating; it was unclear if the superstructure had been built over an earlier basement. However, tree-ring dating has established that the building is wholly one phase from basement to roof, dating from c.1420. The location of Aberconwy House near the quay, and its distinctive plan, suggest that it was a merchant's house with the dwelling raised over the trading basement. The basement (which was divided) was entered from the street and was probably a combination of shop and store. Heating from a brazier has left heavy sooting on the ceiling beams. The domestic accommodation above included the hall, heated by a lateral fireplace, on the first floor, and chambers open to the roof on the second floor.<sup>52</sup>



Figure 3.10 Royal House, Machynlleth: a sixteenth-century mercer's house and shop facing the market area, built in 1561 with additions of 1576. Crown copyright: RCAHMW.

Merchants and mercers dealt in traded commodities (wine, foods, textiles, and so on) and supplied town and country with imported goods. Mercers emerge strongly in sixteenth-century litigation as retailers supplying the gentry class with these commodities on credit. Purchases were entered in the mercer's 'debitory' book and a 'rolling debt' was often extinguished only by executors. Litigation over debts owing to mercers by country gentlemen, particularly for purchases of textiles, were presumably the result of frequent visits to the

merciers' shops where irresistible goods were bought on credit. Merciers' houses were generally sited on or near the marketplace with a shop and 'office' fronting the street combined with a dwelling. The lease of a dwelling and shop in the High Street, Cardiff, by a merchant to a mercer in 1562 included the basic stock ('parcells of wares') of fabrics worth £30: 'fustianes, worsteds, sarsenett, kerses, and dyversse sortes of lynyen clothe'.<sup>53</sup>

There were substantial merciers' shops in every town, but most surviving examples are fragmentary and poorly documented. Royal House, Machynlleth, is exceptional in that it is relatively complete, securely dated and well documented. Royal House occupied a corner site in the market area of Machynlleth between the town hall and the church (Figure 3.10). The fully storeyed range presented a narrow gabled front (possibly originally an elaborate timber front) to the street but with a long range stretching down a half-burage plot with an access lane ('Garsiwn'). The range has three distinct parts, with the dwelling set between an upper shop and a lower warehouse. The house was entered from the lane by a doorway secured by a draw-bar. The kitchen was at ground-floor level with hall and parlour on the first floor. Straight joints show that the lower store has been added and that the shop front has been reconstructed. Originally (it seems) there was a small shop which could be entered from the street with a flanking office or counting-house (presumably where the 'book' was kept) intercommunicating with the kitchen. High-quality vernacular detail survives in the principal rooms, with the hall having a painted screen and corbelled fireplace in the hall, and a quasi-heraldic plaster overmantel in the parlour. Tree-ring dating has established that the house and shop were built in 1561 and the warehouse added in 1576. This is consistent with the available documentation and the architectural detail. In 1581, the house was occupied by a younger son of a local gentry family, who may well have been a mercer and added the warehouse (called "Sgubor Newydd" in the deeds), whose successors there were certainly styled mercers and drapers. The continuity of this building as a mercer's shop is remarkable: the last Royal House draper retired in 1988.<sup>54</sup>

The older medieval houses in the commercial zone were generally sited gable-end to the street with an open hall behind a commercial range fronting the street. There are notable examples in Wrexham (7 Town Hill) and Beaumaris (32 Castle Street). The Wrexham range has an open hall (with an archbraced central cruck-truss) set at right angles to the street (Figure 3.11). The front range facing the street is storeyed and appears to have been a row of ground-floor shops with solars above. An intriguing feature is the linenfold bench back which remains set against the gable end of the end shop. The Rose and Crown (32 Castle Street), Beaumaris, is similar and preserves some evidence for shops fronting the street below the first-floor solar.

Surviving merciers' and merchants' dwellings are substantial buildings in prominent locations. It is more difficult to identify the dwellings and workshops

of the numerous tradesmen and craftsmen who lived in the towns: the butchers, bakers, shoemakers, glovers, weavers and others. However, comparative work in some of the English towns, especially in the south and Midlands, suggests what might be expected. Artisans' dwellings and workshops were often built in rows, sometimes commissioned by great landowners, including the church. They were storeyed ranges, generally having a shop or workshop at the front, with the hall/kitchen at the rear. The front of the shop might incorporate a hinged board which could be let down as the shopboard on which goods were displayed. These dwellings and workshops were often in the side-streets adjacent to the market area. As these buildings, especially the frontages, are vulnerable to development, it is difficult to identify them with certainty. However, Palace Street, Caernarfon, seems to preserve several substantial dwellings of this type which must have belonged to prosperous tradesmen. Behind the Georgian and Victorian frontages there are storeyed timber-framed dwellings of distinctive type. Number 6 Palace Street (saved from demolition in the 1980s) is a virtually complete box-framed dwelling, although the front has been rebuilt. The dwelling originally presented a jettied, timber-framed gable-end to the street with a long range of four bays behind. The range was fully storeyed with a cellar under the front bays. It seems likely that the front bays formed a workshop and store with a hall/kitchen behind and with chambers above. Tree-ring dating has established that the timber for No. 6 was felled in winter 1506/7.<sup>55</sup>



Figure 3.11 Halls and shops at Town Hill, Wrexham.

Crown copyright: RCAHMW.





Figure 3.12 High Street, Denbigh, showing the covered walk.

Crown copyright: RCAHMW.

By the earlier sixteenth century, the market area of a town was characteristically filled with rows of jettied houses which combined mercers' shops, artisans' workshops, alehouses and taverns, with booths and stalls in the forefronts of these buildings. Topographical drawings sometimes provide a partial glimpse of this vanished townscape. Jettying provided a way of expanding into the street at first-floor level and sheltering the 'forefront' (a common term) of the building at street level. In mid-fifteenth-century Ruthin (between 1447 and 1456) there were several successful requests to erect posts that would support projecting 'solars'. A row of oversailing first-floor chambers created dry walkways punctuated by posts. These arcades were a feature of several market towns in England, as at Totnes (Devon) where the arcades provided shelter for stalls or standings. In Wales, arcades survive at Market Row in Abergavenny and, most notably, in the colonnades on the south side of High Street, Denbigh, referred to today as the 'piazza' or *bylciau* ('bulks' or 'baulks'). In their present form, the stone colonnades are probably Georgian replacements of earlier ad hoc posts, but an element of planning is not improbable.<sup>56</sup> In the sixteenth century, this area of market infill was referred to as Shop Row, and one may suppose that the oversailing solars sheltered the shop-boards or stalls in the street below (Figure 3.12). The 'bulk' referred to the projecting jetty-beam (from which goods may have been suspended) or to the chambers above. Tree-ring dating suggests that these houses have a range of sixteenth-century dates, and there has probably been a constant process of rebuilding here. The most complete example is Siop Clwyd which combines an (open) hall with jettied ends and has been tree-ring dated to 1533.<sup>57</sup>

*Dwellings and mansions*

Beyond the commercial areas of the town lay purely residential areas. There was certainly a great range in the relative status of these dwellings from cottage to great house, but by and large only substantial high-status houses have survived. The dwellings of the urban poor are known only from documentary sources.<sup>58</sup> Surviving late-medieval houses on the periphery of a town's trading area were indistinguishable in plan from hall-houses in rural areas. The non-commercial house is often recognizable from its relation to the street. Pressure on space in the market areas meant that townhouses usually presented the gable-end to the street, giving rise to characteristic multi-gabled rows. On the outskirts of the town, where there was more space, the house was often built parallel with the street.

Several large fifteenth-century halls have survived in the residential peripheries of Welsh towns. Nantclwyd House, Ruthin, is the earliest hall-house so far identified in a Welsh town, and was built from timber felled in the winter of 1434/5. This three-unit hall-house lies parallel to the road and is jettied on the road side. The hall was built at the end of Castle Street (where the English families tended to live) near the entrance to the castle, and had a succession of high-status owners, including by 1490/1 the coroner of the lordship.<sup>59</sup> Parliament House, Machynlleth, is another substantial hall-house having a hall of three bays and a wide passage set between inner and outer bays. The obvious antiquity of this house has led to the clustering of traditions around it, but tree-ring dating has shown that it was constructed from timber felled in summer 1470, several generations after Owain Glyn Dŵr's parliament was held in Machynlleth. In Conwy, the former Black Lion Inn (11 Castle Street) is another hall-house sited parallel to the street, which preserves its smoke-blackened hall, and has been dated by dendrochronology to 1440/41.<sup>60</sup>

Many other towns retain evidence for hall-houses. Several probable but as yet undated fragmentary halls survive in Denbigh. At Presteigne, a spacious market town, several medieval houses take the form of open hall and storeyed cross-wing combinations. Most notable is Whitehall, tree-ring dated to 1462/3. Here a two-bayed hall with smoke-louvre has a cross-wing of four bays (Figure 3.13). Several other cross-wings have been identified in the town, some dating from the earlier fifteenth century. At Tanhouse, at the far end of Broad Street, a fine solar cross-wing with multi-cusped trusses survives from a lost hall and has been dated by dendrochronology to 1435/6. It is clear that urban recovery was well underway in some towns in the first half of the fifteenth century, with investment in substantial halls and great houses or mansions.<sup>61</sup>



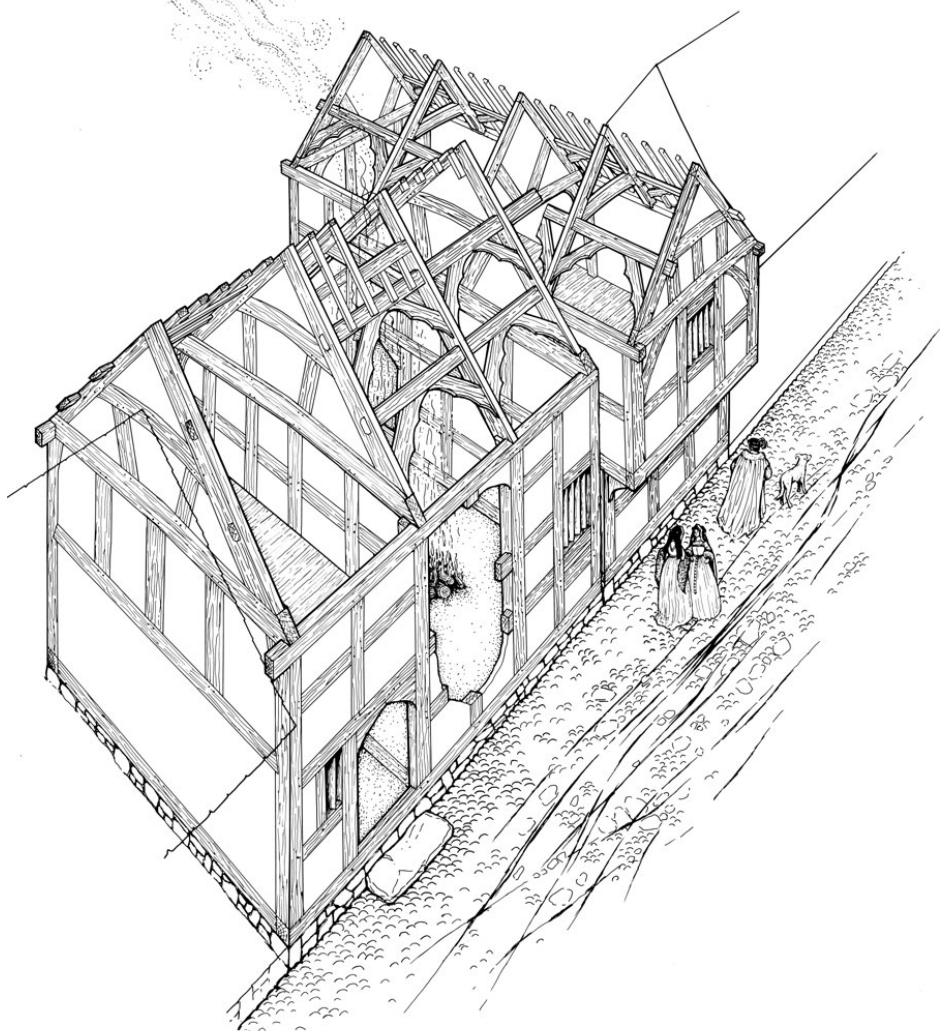


Figure 3.13 Whitehall, Presteigne: an urban hall-and-cross-wing range, tree-ring dated 1462–3. Crown copyright: RCAHWW.

The urban great house expressed local domination by a successful family. Great houses were power bases associated with rivalry and factionalism that occasionally erupted in urban disorder with clashes between the servants and retainers of rivals. Many fifteenth-century Welsh towns probably had stone-built mansions set in courtyards, such as are documented in Shrewsbury. It is likely that William Herbert's 'palace' in Monmouth was of this type. Occasionally there were unfinished monuments to abruptly terminated ambition. In Cardiff, Sir Roger Vaughan, chancellor of the lordship of Glamorgan, 'caused to be builded very strong and high walls for a house' called

‘New Place’, but Vaughan was executed in Chepstow by Jasper Tudor in 1471. The mansion was never finished, and the freestone and rubble were eventually sold off.<sup>62</sup>

The earliest urban mansions for which there is detailed information were the houses of Tudor administrators. Their houses were of the prevailing hall-house type but set within a courtyard complex. Sir Matthew Cradock’s (d.1531) mansion, New Place in Swansea, was the seat of a powerful official, deputy of the earl of Worcester and chancellor of the lordship of Glamorgan, and steward of Gower and Kilvay. New Place was a large hall-house flanked by other ranges set within an enclosure close to Swansea Castle and possibly utilizing part of the defences of the castle. Drawings and a model of it show the complex was entered from a gatehouse (with armorial panels) with associated wall-walk. The large hall apparently had five bays with an oriel and stair-tower at the dais end. Similarly, Cwrt Plas-yn-dre in Dolgellau was the home of another official, ‘Baron’ Lewis Owen (d.1555), deputy chamberlain of north Wales and baron (‘judge’) of the exchequer at Caernarfon, sheriff of Merioneth and MP for the county. Cwrt Plas-yn-dre was an elaborate hall-house where the hall was dignified by an aisle-truss and much ornate timberwork. The hall chimney, which may have been original, is shown in several illustrations and seems to have had a distinctive frieze or arcading of brickwork. The use of brick, though only for decoration, probably reflects the increasing use of brick in London. Hen Blas (Figure 3.8), the seat of the Bulkeley family who dominated Beaumaris in the sixteenth century, was an H-plan hall-house, probably built by Sir Richard Bulkeley, Chamberlain of North Wales (d.1547). The house was wholly timber-framed and, like Cwrt Plas-yn-dre, probably had aisle posts which dramatized the entry into the hall. Confident if not arrogant mottoes, with the badge of the Bulkeleys (a caboched bull’s head), were placed on the windows of the house, announcing: IF GOD BE WITH VS WHO CAN BE AGAINST; THE GYFTE OF THE LANDE AND OF GOD.<sup>63</sup>

These great houses were large complexes but their later sixteenth-century successors could be prodigious or ‘sumptuous’, as Herbert House in Cardiff was described. Sir William Herbert, the builder, was an MP, deputy lieutenant and sheriff for five terms. Speed’s map of Cardiff shows Herbert House as an imposing multi-gabled courtyard complex with a towered porch. The house was three-storeyed, lavishly fenestrated with canted bays, and had a cupola topped by a weather vane. The house was built on the site of the dissolved friary in Cardiff, acquired by the Herberts in the mid-sixteenth century, though the house was not built on the site until 1582. The dissolution of urban religious houses released land for building great houses in many English and Welsh towns.<sup>64</sup>

Plas Mawr, Conwy, provides the best example of a later sixteenth-century urban mansion. Plas Mawr has some claim to be the most complete urban house of its type in the British Isles. The builder, Robert Wynn, was a younger

son of Gwydir, and had a successful military and diplomatic career. Wynn eventually settled in Conwy and succeeded through several purchases in acquiring a large plot on which he built an urban mansion in several phases between 1576 and 1585. The mansion is shown in a bird's-eye view of Conwy c.1600 as the largest house by far in the walled town. The multigabled house was entered via a gatehouse leading into an outer courtyard. The three-storey main block has projecting bays with a stair-turret and 'pleasance'. Innovative architectural features included the crow-stepped gables, the elaborate ceilings and overmantels, the pedimented windows, and the polyhedron finials which unified the complex. One of the most revealing features is the treatment of the great chamber. Here an elaborate plaster ceiling dated 1580 conceals an open, archbraced, cusped and 'overpegged' roof of traditional type that was clearly originally intended to be seen from the great chamber. Tree-ring dating has shown that the timber for these trusses was felled in 1578. Evidently, rather late in the day, the plaster ceiling was preferred to the old-fashioned cusped trusses; rarely can a change in taste be so precisely dated.<sup>65</sup>

Robert Wynn's house in its final form consisted of an E-plan range with the hall set between gatehouse and lower courtyard and parlour and upper court. Plas Mawr has been described as half palazzo and half manor-house, and it is related to villa-like merchants' houses in the London area. In terms of detail and decoration, the house is full of 'Renaissance' features derived from different sources. The rejection of the decorative open roof was a decisive break with the past, and elements of the decoration (especially the crow-stepped gables) influenced the new stone-built houses of the gentry in the countryside.<sup>66</sup>

### *Town churches*

Urban parish churches were on the whole larger and better resourced than their country counterparts. Churches generally, but town churches in particular, were rebuilt or enlarged and beautified in the later fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries by the addition of aisles, new ornate roofs, screens and other fine woodwork, and particularly by the construction of towers. Some fortunate churches derived an additional income from the offerings of pilgrims. This was true of the 'rood churches' (so called) at Brecon (St Mary's) and Carmarthen; miraculous statues of the Virgin attracted pilgrims to Cardigan and Mold. No doubt the offerings of pilgrims helped fund the rather fine late-medieval additions to these churches. Undoubtedly there was a competitive element to late-medieval church building. Towers, in particular, were an extravagant non-liturgical addition to churches. They were not only visually striking but held the bells which were a further demonstration of wealth, whose sound punctuated the day, calling worshippers to church, announcing events, including funerals, and occasional alarms and celebrations.<sup>67</sup>

There were two particularly notable perpendicular church towers in Wales, in the north at Wrexham, and at Cardiff in the south. St Mary's church tower in

Cardiff is stylistically related to a group of West Country churches influenced by Gloucester cathedral and the work of a master mason c.1490. We have Rice Merrick's testimony that St Mary's tower was made by one 'Hart', a mason, who also made the towers at Wrexham and St Stephen's, Bristol. Hart has been identified as William Hart, or Hort, a Bristol or Gloucestershire mason, who may indeed have built St Stephen's tower. The tower at Cardiff rises through four stages to a crown of elaborate pinnacles. Merrick makes a rare sixteenth-century aesthetic comment, 'The workmanship of it being carried to a great height, and above beautified with pinnacles, of all skilful [= discerning] beholders is very well liked of.' St Giles's Church tower, Wrexham, was even more ambitious and later rated as 'one of the wonders of Wales' (Figure 3.14). An inscription of 1506 probably marks its completion, but an entry in a brief chronicle seems convincingly to mark the beginning of the project in 1501.<sup>68</sup>

Tower building might be part of ambitious renovation schemes that extended over several decades. At Wrexham, remodelling the church involved rebuilding the aisles and the creation of a 'through church' without a chancel arch. Roof renewal was a general phenomenon c.1500. and several urban churches commissioned fashionable flat roofs, often embellished with armorial and decorative bosses that acknowledged local patronage and history. In Pembrokeshire, Tenby and Haverfordwest churches gained spectacular roofs, the latter particularly notable for its pendants which must be broadly contemporary with the extravagant nave ceiling at St Davids Cathedral under construction in the 1530s. The double-nave church at Ruthin similarly acquired flat roofs with several hundred bosses, some carved with the badges of the families historically associated with the lordship of Dyffryn Clwyd. Investment in church fabric continued to the very eve of the Reformation. Some parochial churches even benefitted from the dissolution of religious houses. At Llanidloes, the church was enlarged using an arcade brought from the dissolved abbey of Cwm-hir. The new hammer-beam roof was specially commissioned and bears the date of completion on one of the shields of the angel terminals in both Christian calendar (ad1542) and regnal years (36 Henry VIII). It was of course the year of the great Ordinance for Wales.<sup>69</sup>



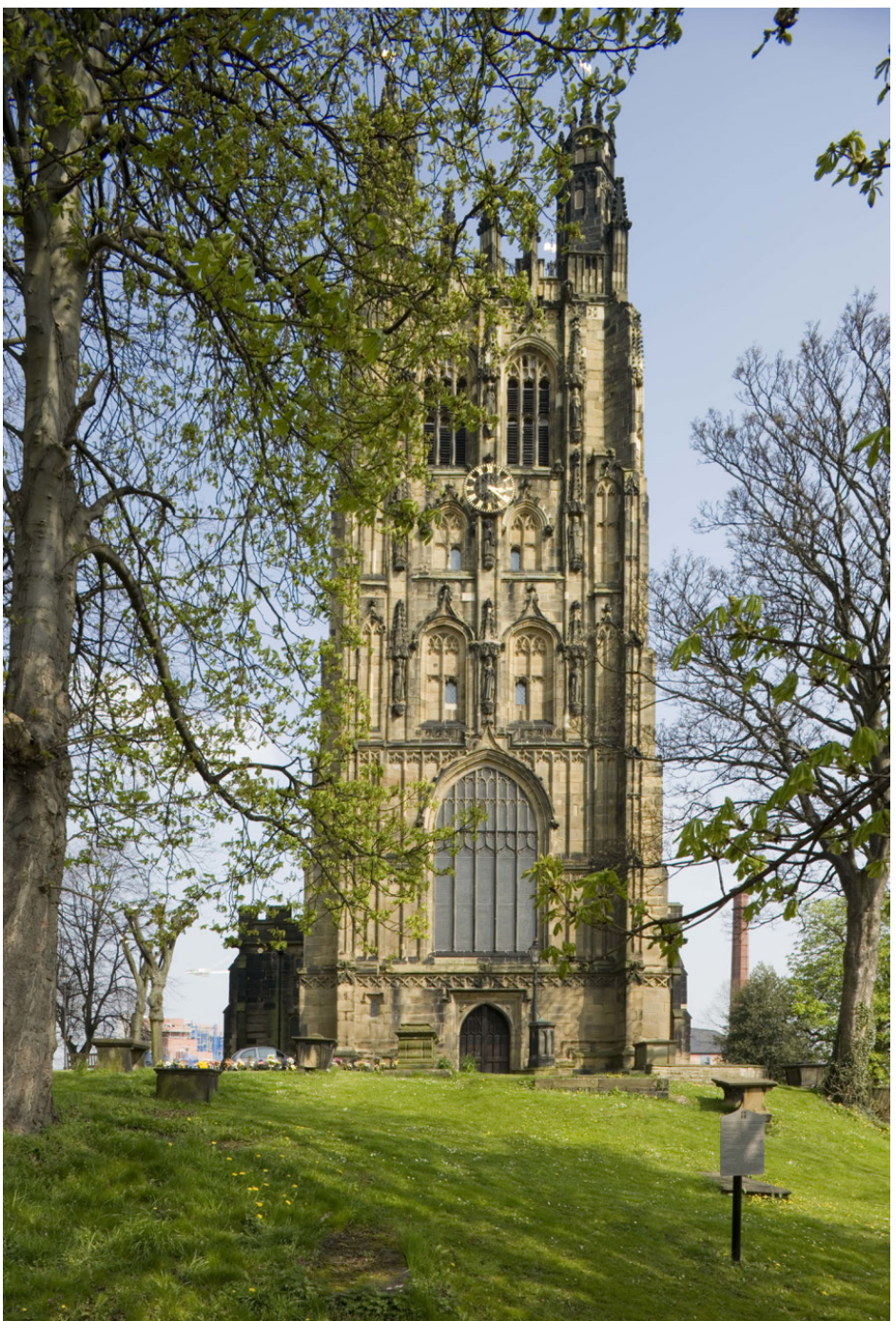


Figure 3.14 St Giles's Church, Wrexham: an urban church with ambitious tower in Denbighshire. Crown copyright: RCAHMW.

The Reformation simplified the ecclesiastical structure of the Welsh town. Most towns lost several religious buildings. Cardiff retained its two parish churches but lost St Piran's, the cordwainer's chapel, as well as both friaries.

The dissolution of the religious houses altered the character of many towns, often depriving a town of an architecturally distinguished landmark but also releasing land for development. The precincts had various fates. Some monastic sites became the foci for new, aristocratic houses, as at Greyfriars, Cardiff. Other sites were redeveloped, as at Haverfordwest, where the priory site became part of the riverside commercial area. The priories at Brecon and Abergavenny had a parochial function and these towns were fortunate to retain their priory churches as parish churches, although their precincts were appropriated for new secular mansions.

The dissolution of religious houses involved the loss of most of the funerary monuments associated with them. Many religious houses contained the tombs of locally powerful families, and some had the ancestral tombs of noble and royal lineages. Fellowes' armorial notes on religious houses recorded an accumulation of monuments, now almost entirely disappeared. Most notably, Greyfriars, Carmarthen, possessed the tomb of Edmund Tudor (the earl of Richmond), the father of Henry VII, and was endowed with a modest chantry. This royal tomb was not allowed to suffer destruction and was removed to St Davids Cathedral in about 1540. There was a kind of translation of relics as the cult of St David was replaced by the royal cult of the Tudors, and Richmond's tomb was placed in front of the pillaged shrine of St David. Surprisingly few tombs seem to have been preserved from the religious houses. The survival of the monuments of the Herberts of Raglan at Abergavenny, where William ap Thomas, the founder of the family, lies with his progeny in the former Priory church, shows what may have been lost elsewhere. The influence of the Herberts preserved these tombs from attack by reformers (who had destroyed the celebrated Abergavenny Jesse) but they were mutilated in renewed iconoclasm during the Civil War.<sup>70</sup>

The Reformation eroded the sense of ownership of the churches held by guilds, fraternities and other groups. Halls owned by guilds were not particularly important in the Welsh towns, though they existed in Cardiff, Haverfordwest and elsewhere. The architectural focus of most guilds was the church. At Brecon, the five or six guilds (weavers, tuckers, tailors, shoemakers, skinnners and mercers) met in the town's two churches where they had chapels and chose their officers. The shoemakers (and presumably the other guilds) provided torches carried by apprentices at processions on certain feast-days, and undertook to complete the cloisters at the Priory church. As guild chapels in parish churches were suppressed, and ornaments and vestments confiscated, so the close connection of the guilds with the church was severed. There was sometimes resistance, as at Cardiff in 1548, when armed cordwainers briefly withheld St Piran's Chapel from the crown authorities.<sup>71</sup> There was a fundamental social change from the mid-sixteenth century as the guilds migrated from the church to the alehouse and the fraternities disappeared.<sup>72</sup> The principal town churches became dominated by elites as an arena for

asserting status and filled up with wainscot pews, with special ornate pews reserved for mayor and aldermen. At Montgomery, the mayor's pew displayed the arms of the borough; at Haverfordwest, the canopied mayor's seat was carved with a representation of St Michael overcoming Satan. The interiors of churches accumulated the new memorials of mayors, aldermen and burgesses, and these proclaimed the virtues of their class. Local oligarchs appropriated for themselves the space of the parish church for burial as well as worship. In Haverfordwest, orders were issued (or reissued) by the corporation in about 1632 regulating burials in the church. According to the order, there had been much disorder in allowing so many of the 'meaner sort' (strangers as well as townsmen and -women) to be buried in the chancel and other parts of the church, which were now reserved for the aldermen and their wives.<sup>73</sup>

The expensive remodelling of urban churches stopped abruptly with the Reformation. Internally, churches were re-ordered with the demolition of altars, rood-lofts, shrines and some monuments. Further episodes of iconoclasm by Parliamentarians involved the destruction of the remaining stainedglass windows, organs and other provocative items in already visually impoverished urban churches. No new town church – apart from one – was built until the eighteenth century, and there were occasional losses in the seventeenth century.<sup>74</sup> The single exception is extraordinary and revealing. The earl of Leicester began building a huge Protestant preaching church at Denbigh in 1579, but it was never finished. There was considerable tension between Leicester and the town. The space within the great unfinished church was eventually appropriated for sports ('desecrated into a cock-pit and ring') and symbolized the victory of the town over their former lord.<sup>75</sup>

### *Approaching the early-modern town*

This chapter has been considering the buildings and – equally as significant – the spaces of the Welsh town in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Tree-ring dating has now shown that the earliest standing structures, apart from the castles and churches, belong to the fifteenth century. If there had been a period of substantial building in the fourteenth century, as there was in many English towns, these buildings have disappeared. The earliest surviving buildings belong to the early fifteenth century, and revealingly they are purely urban structures. Aberconwy House is a particularly impressive storeyed house which combined domestic and trading functions in a deliberately eye-catching jettied building. Ruthin's courthouse, set in the marketplace, is inseparable from the post-Glyn Dŵr restoration of the town's role as a judicial and administrative centre. Thereafter, a wide range of urban buildings (shops, storehouses, market-houses, high-crosses, shire halls, and so on) is represented in the Welsh towns.

The late-medieval Welsh town – like the late-medieval English town – was primarily a timber-built town. Lavish timber-framing, especially in the centre of town, reached new levels of display as well as new heights with the



construction of three-storeyed jettied houses. The beginning of the end of the urban timber-building tradition is signalled by the construction of large gentry houses (notably Plas Mawr, Conwy) in the later sixteenth century. Lesser, but still substantial, stone-built storeyed houses were built in late Elizabethan and early Stuart Welsh towns from Abergavenny to Wrexham. The earliest securely-dated example is the tower-like Bronyffynnon, Denbigh, with three storeys and gable-end fireplaces, and was built from timber felled in 1581. The Welsh town was gradually transformed into a stone-built town after 1600. Towns were still primarily timber, though the timber might be hidden by plaster and pargetting, and there were still devastating fires. Fires burnt out large areas of Presteigne, Builth and Wrexham in the seventeenth century. These fires changed the face of some Welsh towns – though they were changing anyway – as buildings were rebuilt in stone or brick.<sup>76</sup>

It is important to appreciate that the Reformation made the biggest impact on the appearance of Welsh and English towns just before the mid-sixteenth century, especially with the dissolution of the urban religious houses. The loss of religious buildings deprived people of familiar landmarks which had given stability and structure to their lives. The ontology of space, the way in which the familiar urban landscape helps structure lives, was a dimension of the late-medieval town as it is of the twenty-first century.

The control of space is a dominant theme of the sixteenth and seventeenth-century town, and involved prolonged skirmishes that were eventually resolved by the modernization of the Georgian and Victorian town. When the country came to town for fairs, markets and wakes, it tended to take over the streets. The control of the market and the suppression of the disorders associated with it, especially the removal of trading from the churchyard, was a preoccupation of seventeenth-century town officials. Control of the streets emerges as one of the key concerns of sixteenth and eighteenth-century civic administration. Controlling misbehaviour involved regulating the alehouses, especially those that harboured vagabonds, and using the houses of correction, a new building-type that emerges at the end of our period. The rebuilding of town halls and shire halls in the decades around 1600 reflects the emergence of urban oligarchs and their determination to control the town. As the motto on Brecon's town hall announced: 'Where Justice rules, there Virtue flows.'

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Lucy Toulmin Smith (ed.), *The Itinerary in Wales of John Leland in or about the Year 1536–1539* (London, 1906), pp. 10–12.

<sup>2</sup>Smith (ed.), *The Itinerary in Wales of John Leland*, p. 116; John Speed, *Theatre of the Empire of Great Britaine* (London, 1676), Part II, p. 101.

<sup>3</sup>Smith (ed.), *The Itinerary in Wales of John Leland*, pp. 41, 111.

<sup>4</sup>J. Gwenogvryn Evans, *Report on Manuscripts in the Welsh Language, Volume II, Part 3* (London, 1905), p. 850 (Panton MS 40); Smith (ed.), *The Itinerary in*

*Wales of John Leland*, pp. 59, 97; *A Catalogue of the Harleian Manuscripts in the British Museum* (4 vols, London, 1808–1812), I, p. 291 (no. 1730).

<sup>5</sup>Richard Suggett, *Houses and History in the March of Wales: Radnorshire 1400–1800* (Aberystwyth, 2005), p. 127; Smith (ed.), *The Itinerary in Wales of John Leland*, pp. 59, 97. The suburbs of Carmarthen were referred to as ‘New Carmarthen’: NLW, Great Sessions 19/45/m.22.

<sup>6</sup>G. R. Elton, ‘Wales in Parliament, 1542–1581’, in R. R. Davies et al. (eds), *Welsh Society and Nationhood: Historical Essays Presented to Glanmor Williams* (Cardiff, 1984), p. 112; G. R. Elton, *Reform and Renewal: Thomas Cromwell and the Common Weal* (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 106–9; Sarah Pearson, ‘The chronological distribution of tree-ring dates, 1980–2001: an update’, *Vernacular Architecture*, 36 (2001), pp. 68–9.

<sup>7</sup>‘Historia Bellomarisei’ [by John Williams], in John Fisher (ed.), *Tours of Wales (1804–1813) by Richard Fenton* (*Archaeologia Cambrensis* Supplement, 1917), p. 288; Hugh Thomas, *An Essay Towards the History of Brecknockshire [1698]*, ed. J. Jones-Davies (Brecon, 1967), p. 21.

<sup>8</sup>Rice Merrick, *Morganiae Archaïographia: A Book of the Antiquities of Glamorganshire*, ed. Brian Ll. James (South Wales Record Soc. I, 1983), p. 88. Some early references to clocks are discussed by Iorwerth C. Peate, *Clock and Watch Makers in Wales* (Cardiff, 1960), chap. 2.

<sup>9</sup>Matthew Griffiths, ‘“Very wealthy by merchandise”: urban fortunes’, in J. Gwynfor Jones (ed.), *Class, Community and Culture in Tudor Wales* (Cardiff, 1989), pp. 197–235; Alan Dyer, ‘Small market towns 1540–1700’, in Peter Clark (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, Volume II: 1540–1840* (Cambridge 2000), esp. pp. 426 (Map 13.1) and 430–1 (Table 13.1), for the hinterlands of Welsh towns; Richard Suggett, ‘Festivals and social structure in early modern Wales’, *Past and Present*, 152 (August 1996), pp. 91–2, for wakes as a feature of pre-Restoration towns rather than the countryside.

<sup>10</sup>Henry Penruddocke Wyndham, *A Gentleman’s Tour through Monmouthshire and Wales* (London, 1775), pp. 194–6. John Thomas, the Victorian photographer, was still able to capture the transformation of towns on market days.

<sup>11</sup>W. Gwyn Thomas, ‘The walls of Tenby’, *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 142 (1993), pp. 1–39; Beaumaris’s ‘muddwale’ is referred to in the Bulkeley rental c. 1575, NLW MS. 1548F.

<sup>12</sup>Machynlleth streets in NLW, Pennal Towers Estate, A1-2, D22, D129; Smith (ed.), *The Itinerary in Wales of John Leland*, p. 97; T. Jones, *History of the County of Brecknock* (4 vols, Brecon, 1909–1930), IV, p. 230.

<sup>13</sup>See Richard Suggett, ‘The buildings in context’, in Dillwyn Miles (ed.), *A History of the Town and County of Haverfordwest* (Llandysul, 1999), pp. 139–40, fig. 44.

<sup>14</sup>NLW Probate Records, will of Richard Williams, LL1645–11; B. G. Charles, *Calendar of the Records of the Borough of Haverfordwest, 1539–1660* (Cardiff, 1967), p. 47; NLW, Great Sessions 19/19/rex.

<sup>15</sup>Suggett, 'The buildings in context', in Miles (ed.), *A History of Haverfordwest*, p. 124; Shop Row, Denbigh: NLW, Great Sessions 21/89/m.8, and n. 57 below; Cardiff had several Middle Rows and Streets: T. Jones, 'The place-names of Cardiff', in William Rees and Henry John Randall (eds), *South Wales and Monmouth Record Society no. 2* (Cardiff, 1950), p. 54.

<sup>16</sup>Merrick, *Morganiae Archaioграфия*, p. 88.

<sup>17</sup>Elias Owen, *Old Stone Crosses of the Vale of Clwyd* (London, 1886), p. 27 (deep abrasions on the shaft from sharpening knives are noted). John Williams, *Ancient and Modern Denbigh* (Denbigh, 1856), pp. 141–3; Norman Tucker, 'The Councell Booke of Ruthin, Part III', *Transactions of the Denbighshire Historical Society*, 11 (1962), p. 60.

<sup>18</sup>Geraint Dyfnallt Owen, *Elizabethan Wales: The Social Scene* (Cardiff, 1962), p. 93; Evans, *Report on Manuscripts in the Welsh Language, Vol. II, Part 1* (London, 1903), p. 89 (Jesus College MS 18).

<sup>19</sup>References to the Great Stone, Cardiff: NLW, Great Sessions 22/69/m.21, 22/81/m.24v, 22/90/m.19; Rupert H. Morris (ed.), *Parochialia . . . By Edward Lhwyd* (3 parts, *Archaeologia Cambrensis* Supplements, 1909–1911), I, p. 146; Lewis Jones, *Rhuddenfab's Hand-book to Ruthin in the Vale of Clwyd* (Ruthin, 1896), p. 16. The great stone at Ruthin was near the 'upper end of the pendist', a reference to a pentice attached to the court-house which sheltered the shambles: NLW, Great Sessions 4/5/1/item 15(3). Cf. John Clark, 'London Stone: stone of Brutus or fetish stone – making the myth', *Folklore*, 121 (2010), pp. 38–60.

<sup>20</sup>E. A. Lewis, 'The toll books of some north Pembrokeshire fairs (1509–1603)', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 7 (1934), pp. 284–318; Elwyn Evans, 'Two Machynlleth toll books', *National Library of Wales Journal*, 6 (1949–50), pp. 78–103, with map showing the distribution of buyers and sellers of livestock.

<sup>21</sup>'Anglesey', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 12 (1881), pp. 60–1. The Winchester measure was not observed in any part of Pembrokeshire in the 1620s; fifty years later it was in use only at Pembroke: NLW, Great Sessions 778/5/31; 782/1/43; 794/3/23 & 795/7/9x.

<sup>22</sup>William Rees (ed.), *A Survey of the Duchy of Lancaster Lordships in Wales, 1609–1613* (Cardiff, 1953), p. 10.

<sup>23</sup>Dating of Ruthin courthouse in *Vernacular Architecture*, 36 (2005), p. 100; R. R. Davies, *The Revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 298–9; G. A. Homes, *The Estates of the Higher Nobility in Fourteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1957), p. 160.

<sup>24</sup>Smith (ed.), *Itinerary in Wales of John Leland*, pp. 59, 96; NLW, Picton Deeds 12 and 107: grants of 'arches' (= vaults) under the council chamber in Haverfordwest, 1487; Llanidloes courthouse in *Vernacular Architecture*, 34 (2003), p. 120.

<sup>25</sup>W. H. Baker, 'The Shire Hall', *Presenting Monmouthshire*, 23 (Spring 1967), 7–15; Jones, *History of the County of Brecknock*, II, p. 123.

<sup>26</sup>Williams, *Ancient and Modern Denbigh*, pp. 98–9; Speed, *Theatre of the Empire of Great Britaine*, Part II, p. 119.

<sup>27</sup>NLW, Great Sessions 4/343/3/item 99. Cf. Great Sessions 4/883/8/item 44 for tennis playing in Cardigan churchyard which disturbed the assize judges in 1580.

<sup>28</sup>D. M. Dean, 'Parliament and locality', in D. M. Dean and N. L. Jones (eds), *The Parliaments of Elizabethan England* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 149–50.

<sup>29</sup>John Bruce (ed.), *Liber Famelicus of Sir James Whitelocke*, Camden Society no. 70 (London, 1858), pp. 88–9.

<sup>30</sup>NLW MS 9671E (1577 survey of Haverfordwest); Bodleian Library, MS Gough Wales 4, f. 65.

<sup>31</sup>Jones, 'The place-names of Cardiff', pp. 45–6; Suggett, 'The buildings in context', p. 151.

<sup>32</sup>For the Burgess' Tower as a prison, see Williams, *Ancient and Modern Denbigh*, pp. 314–15; Great Sessions 4/5/2/item 17; NLW MS 1548F for Beaumaris gaol.

<sup>33</sup>Richard Suggett, 'The Welsh language and the court of Great Sessions', in Geraint H. Jenkins (ed.), *The Welsh Language before the Industrial Revolution* (Cardiff, 1997), p. 163.

<sup>34</sup>Examples in Great Sessions 4/31/6/item 21 (Thomas Evans to stand in the pillory with a paper on his forehead showing that he was convicted of perjury) and Great Sessions 4/722/7/item 31 (four convicted of uttering false coin to stand in the pillory with details of the their offence 'writte[n] in large characters' on papers fixed to their breasts).

<sup>35</sup>Bodleian Library, MS Gough Wales 4, f. 65.

<sup>36</sup>Breconshire justices presented in 1586 for not building a house of correction as required by statute: NLW, Great Sessions 13/18/3/unnumbered. Pembrokeshire's house of correction was not established until 1614. Cf. Joanna Innes, 'Prisons for the poor: English bridewells, 1555–1800', in F. Snyder and D. Hay (eds), *Labour, Law, and Crime* (London, 1987), pp. 42–122.

<sup>37</sup>NLW, Great Sessions 4/781/4/28; Great Sessions 4/783/2/109.

<sup>38</sup>NLW, Denbighshire Quarter Sessions, Chirk B/21b/25; Chirk B/30a/28; Chirk B/30b/28; Chirk B/27a/13.

<sup>39</sup>Ralph Flenley (ed.), *A Calendar of the Register of the . . . Council in the . . .*

*Marches of Wales [1535] 1569–1591* (London, Cymmrodorion Record Series 8, 1916), p. 171.

<sup>40</sup>T. Jones, ‘The place-names of Cardiff’, p. 51; NLW, Great Sessions 22/55/7: burgage called ‘The Estrie’, West St.

<sup>41</sup>Peter Clark, *The English Alehouse: A Social History, 1200–1830* (London, 1983), pp. 67–8.

<sup>42</sup>Flenley, *Calendar of the Register of the . . . Council in the . . . Marches of Wales*, p. 171; NLW, Great Sessions 13/17/16/unnumbered presentment.

<sup>43</sup>See Ron Shoesmith, ‘Chepstow town, priory and port wall’, in Rick Turner and Andy Johnson (eds), *Chepstow Castle: Its History and Buildings* (Logaston, 2006), pp. 204–7.

<sup>44</sup>Cf. ‘Tafarn y Groes’ (1580) and the quaintly-named ‘James the Scot’ (Llandudno, 1616) noted in John Ballinger (ed.), *Calendar of Wynn (of Gwydir) Papers 1515–1690* (Aberystwyth, 1926), nos. 93, 774. Signs of the Raven and of the Swan (Ruthin) are referred to in NLW, Great Sessions 4/8/1/item 27 & 4/32/2/ item 30.

<sup>45</sup>Fred J. Hando, *Rambles in Gwent* (Newport, 1924), pp. 45–7.

<sup>46</sup>Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW), *An Inventory of the Ancient Monuments in Glamorgan, Vol. III, Part II: Medieval Secular Non-defensive Monuments* (Cardiff, 1982), pp. 144–6, 171–5.

<sup>47</sup>NLW, unnumbered presentments in Great Sessions 13/17/16 and Great Sessions 13/17/20.

<sup>48</sup>Iorwerth C. Peate, *The Denbigh Cockpit and Cockfighting in Wales* (Cardiff, 1970).

<sup>49</sup>Sir John Wynn, *History of the Gwydir Family and Memoirs*, ed. J. Gwynfor Jones (Llandysul, 1990), p. 49.

<sup>50</sup>NLW MS 1548F (rental with map based on it).

<sup>51</sup>Some small creeks and harbours had storehouses. Cf. the storehouse at Barry where 50 bushels of wheat were to be delivered in 1585: NLW, Great Sessions 22/78/m.27. The vaulted building, moved from Haverfordwest Quay to the Museum of Welsh Life, St Fagan’s, is probably a building of this type.

<sup>52</sup>Tree-ring dating reported in *Vernacular Architecture*, 32 (2001), pp. 86–7.

<sup>53</sup>*Ieuan Johnes v. William Siner*, Great Sessions 22/37/m.18.

<sup>54</sup>Richard Suggett, ‘Royal House, Machynlleth’, in Peter Wakelin and Ralph A. Griffiths (eds), *Hidden Histories: Discovering the Heritage of Wales* (Aberystwyth, 2008), pp. 162–3.

<sup>55</sup>Tree-ring dating reported in *Vernacular Architecture*, 31 (2010), p. 115. No. 16 Palace Street is another box-framed range of similar date.

<sup>56</sup>R. Ian Jack, ‘The fire ordinances of Ruthin, 1364’, *Transactions of the Denbighshire Historical Society*, 28 (1979), p. 9; R. M. Owen, ‘The street names of

Denbigh, part II', *Transactions of the Denbighshire Historical Society*, 29 (1980), pp. 109–11.

<sup>57</sup>A documentary reference describes rebuilding here in the later sixteenth century. By an agreement dated 23 January 1581, Hugh Rosindale alias Lloyd agreed to deliver to his son John wares amounting to £60 (valued by two mercers). Hugh was to erect and finish the new house 'in the backe side of the shope roe', viz. 'one stone chimney for two fires, the timber worke, windows, chambers, and sollers or lofts therof'. *Executors of Robert Dolben v. Richard Rosyndall*, Great Sessions 21/89/m.8; issue on the erection of chimneys.

<sup>58</sup>The 1586 Bulkeley rental of Beaumaris included a row of seven bays near the almshouse sublet to four men and two women, including Jonet ferch John Gronow, 'a blind nurs'. The row was measured in 'cloth yards' (24 ins length and 4½ ins width) and had a garden extending to the town wall. NLW MS. 1548F, entry 49.

<sup>59</sup>Description and dating in *Vernacular Architecture*, 36 (2005), pp. 100–1; C. J. Williams and C. Kightly, *Nantclwyd y Dre: A Detailed History* (Ruthin, 2007).

<sup>60</sup>Description and dating in *Vernacular Architecture*, 35 (2004), p. 112.

<sup>61</sup>Suggett, *Houses and History in the March of Wales: Radnorshire 1400–1800*, pp. 126–34.

<sup>62</sup>NLW MS Badminton M2, No. 1583; Merrick, *Morganiae Archaialographia*, p. 88.

<sup>63</sup>RCAHMW, *Inventory of the Ancient Monuments in Glamorgan, Vol. III, Part II: Medieval Secular Non-defensive Monuments*, pp. 125–8 (New Place); Peter Smith, 'Houses c. 1415–c. 1642', in J. and Ll. Beverley Smith (eds), *History of Merioneth, Vol. II: The Middle Ages* (Cardiff, 2001), pp. 446–7 (Cwrt Plas-yndre); Peter Smith, *Houses of the Welsh Countryside: A Study in Historical Geography* (London, 1975), p. 121; NLW MS 1531D (Hen Blas).

<sup>64</sup>RCAHMW, *An Inventory of the Ancient Monuments in Glamorgan, Vol. IV, Part I: The Greater Houses* (Cardiff, 1981), pp. 237–42.

<sup>65</sup>Rick Turner, *Plas Mawr, Conwy* (Cardiff, 2000), esp. p. 12 (reproduction of the Salisbury bird's-eye view) and pp. 18–19 (roof).

<sup>66</sup>Cf. Richard Haslam et al., *The Buildings of Wales: Gwynedd* (New Haven/London, 2009), p. 336.

<sup>67</sup>For a general discussion, see Richard Suggett, 'Church-building in late medieval Wales', in Ralph A. Griffiths and Phillipp Schofield (eds), *Wales and the Welsh in the Middle Ages* (Cardiff, 2011), pp. 180–202.

<sup>68</sup>Merrick, *Morganiae Archaialographia*, p. 87; Wrexham steeple was begun in 1501: see Evans, *Report on Manuscripts in the Welsh Language, Vol. II, Part 3* (London, 1905), p. 850 (Panton MS 40).

<sup>69</sup>Description and dating in *Vernacular Architecture*, 34 (2003), pp. 120–1.



<sup>70</sup>Michael Siddons (ed.), *Visitations by the Heralds in Wales* (London, 1996); Phillip Lindley, *Tomb Destruction and Scholarship: Medieval Monuments in Early Modern England* (Donington, 2007), especially pp. 199–220, for a discussion of the Abergavenny monuments.

<sup>71</sup>Jones, *History of the County of Brecknock*, II, p. 57; William Rees, *Cardiff: A History of the City* (Cardiff, 1969), pp. 68–9.

<sup>72</sup>Cf. Williams, *Ancient and Modern Denbigh*, p. 131, where the author describes consulting the records of the defunct Cordwainers' Company in the Star Inn which were kept in a special chest inscribed with the initials of the stewards and dated 1679.

<sup>73</sup>*Calendar of the Records of the Borough of Haverfordwest, 1539–1660*, ed. B. G. Charles (Cardiff, 1967), pp. 65–6.

<sup>74</sup>Notably the loss of St Mary's, Cardiff, from erosion of the riverbank.

<sup>75</sup>Williams, *Ancient and Modern Denbigh*, pp. 291–4.

<sup>76</sup>Wrexham fire of 1643 in *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 13 (1882), pp. 209–10; Presteigne fire of 1681 in Suggett, *Houses and History in the March of Wales*, pp. 127–8; Builth fire of 1691 in Jones, *History of the County of Brecknock*, III, p. 1.

#### *Appendix: dated urban buildings*

1.1214–44 Grosmont Church; nave roof.

2.1237–67 Brecon Priory; smoke-blackened roof of hall.

3.1420 Conwy, Aberconwy House; jettied merchant's house over stone basement (Figure 3.9).

4.1421 Ruthin, Old Courthouse; timber-framed courthouse for the lordship (Figure 3.2).

5.1434/5 Ruthin, Nantclwyd House; timber-framed gentry hall-house parallel to street.

6.1436 Presteigne, Tanhouse; timber gentry hall-house with box-framed solar cross-wing.

7.1441/2 Conwy, former Black Lion, 11 Castle Street; timber-framed open-hall house.

8.1462–3 Presteigne, Whitehall; box-framed hall with solar cross-wing (Figure 3.13).

9.1470 Machynlleth, Parliament House; gentry hall-house parallel to street.

10.1480–1485/6 Beaumaris, Tudor Rose; added timber front range to earlier fifteenth-century hall.

11.1482/3 Beaumaris, 34 Castle Street; storeyed timber-built range on corner site; possibly the solar to a lost hall now occupied by the George and Dragon (1541).

12.1506/7 Caernarfon, 6 Palace Street; storeyed, timber-framed range, jettied to front.



13.1533 Denbigh, Siop Clwyd; timber-framed and jettied range in 'shop row' (Figure 3.12).

14.1538 Llanidloes, St Idloes's parish church; hammer-beam roof to nave.

15.1540–68, 1548–78 Llanidloes, Market Hall (Figure 3.1); earlier phases of timber market-hall rebuilt 1612–22.

16.1541 Beaumaris, George & Dragon; storeyed merchant's house jettied front and back, with wall-paintings (Figure 3.6 and Figure 3.7).

17.1545/6 Bangor, Bishop's Palace; addition of wing to early-sixteenthcentury palace.

18.1546–82 Denbigh, Plough Inn; probable cross-wing to lost hall.

19.1549 Beaumaris, Tudor Rose; floor inserted in undated open hall.

20.1561 Machynlleth, Royal House; mercer's dwelling and shop (Figure 3.10).

21.1566–1602 Denbigh, 'She', Back Row; probable shop and dwelling range, timber-fronted and jettied.

22.\*1570 Denbigh, No. 32 High Street; re-set or copied date inscription.

23.1571 Denbigh, Shire hall; stone-built public building.

24.1573–8 Conwy, Plas-mawr; stone-built great house with inscriptions (1576, 1577, 1580).

25.1576 Machynlleth, Royal House; addition of chambers and storehouse to mercer's dwelling.

26.\*1578 Monmouth, No. 6 Agincourt Square; storeyed town-house.

27.1581 Denbigh, Bronyffynnon, 24 Bridge Street; stone-built, threestorey town-house with garderobe and archbraced chamber trusses.

28.\*1582 Cardiff, Herbert House; urban great house.

29.\*1584 Knighton, 26 High Street; storeyed town-house.

30.\*1589 Conwy, former Black Lion, 11 Castle St; stone conversion of timber hall.

31.\*1589 Brecon, No. 46 High St. Inferior; storeyed town-house.

32.1593/4 Llanidloes, St Idloes's parish church; timber belfry capping to tower.

33.\*1595 Caernarfon, Nos. 5 & 7 Castle Street (former Plas Llanwnda); re-set date inscription.

34.1612–22 Llanidloes, Old Market Hall; rebuilt timber market-hall (Figure 3.1).

35.\*1614 Beaumaris, Shire hall; stone-built public building.

36.\*1624 Brecon, Town hall; timber-built public building.

37.1402–32 Newport, St Woolos's church; nave roof with later north aisle (1475–1505) and south aisle (1496–8) roofs.

38.1516 Beaumaris, 60 Castle Street; storeyed, timber-framed range.

Note: \* = date inscription. The majority of sites have been dated by dendrochronology. Further details are available on the Royal Commission's on-line database Coflein ([www.rcahmw.gov.uk/coflein](http://www.rcahmw.gov.uk/coflein)).

## Towns in Medieval Welsh Poetry

### Dafydd Johnston

Serch Ifor a glodforais,  
 Nid fal serch anwydful Sais,  
 Ac nid af, perffeithiaf pôr,  
 Os eirch ef, o serch Ifor,  
 Nac undydd i drefydd drwg,  
 Nac unnos o Forgannwg.<sup>1</sup>

I have praised Ifor's love, which is unlike that of a stupid Englishman, and I'll not go (most perfect lord) if he so requests, for the love of Ifor, a single day to wicked towns, nor a single night from Glamorgan.

This declaration by Dafydd ap Gwilym in a poem in praise of the court of Ifor ap Llywelyn (Ifor Hael) at Basaleg in Glamorgan, probably in the 1340s, is typical of Welsh poets' ambiguous attitudes towards the towns of medieval Wales.<sup>2</sup> On the one hand, the stated intention to stay on the country estate of a noble patron is in accord with the evidence of praise poetry by the Poets of the Nobility from the fourteenth century to the sixteenth, of which poems in praise of towns and their inhabitants form only a tiny fraction. And yet, on the other hand, the very need to declare an intention to steer clear of towns is a clear indication of their attraction to the poet. The moral censure of the adjective *drwg*, 'wicked', will be seen to resonate with some of Dafydd ap Gwilym's comic narratives which are located in urban settings.

Clear evidence that towns were sources of patronage for the poets is provided by Iolo Goch's account of a journey which he undertook from northeast Wales down to the south-west and back about 1380. The poem employs the convention of the body and soul dialogue, the soul recounting where it travelled in search of the body:

Drwy Geri, gwlad ragorawl,  
 A'r Drefnewydd lifwydd lefn,  
 Bwrdeistref baradwystrefn.<sup>3</sup>

Through Ceri, excellent land, and the smooth-planked Newtown, borough on the model of Paradise.

The aesthetic appreciation of the town's woodwork is noteworthy, as is the *cynghanedd* collocation between *bwrdeistref*, 'borough', and the mutated form of *paradwys*, 'paradise'.<sup>4</sup> After the soul has recounted its journey into

Carmarthenshire the body enquires, ‘A welaist wŷr Cydweli?’ (‘Did you see the men of Kidwelly?’), to which the soul replies, ‘Gwiw olau stryd, gwelais dri’ (‘Fine bright street, I saw three’). The town is again presented as an attractive place, and in this case three patrons are referred to, although not actually named. The soul’s next port of call in its tour of the body’s old haunts is the Cistercian abbey at Whitland, and from there it makes its way north into Ceredigion, calling on Rhydderch ab Ieuan Llwyd and other landed gentry as well as Strata Florida Abbey. The two towns thus take their place alongside religious and secular houses within a network of centres of patronage for the poet – and presumably Iolo Goch was no different to other poets in this respect, although his account of his bardic circuit is unique.

In terms of genre the poems in praise of towns can be seen as a subcategory of those in praise of place which include regions such as Anglesey, Breconshire and Glamorgan.<sup>5</sup> Although relatively few such poems have survived, this should not necessarily be taken as proof of indifference or animosity towards the towns on the part of the poets, since bardic praise was normally addressed to an individual patron rather than the collective celebration implied by praise of a town. In fact, at least one poem which begins as a eulogy to a town, that by Lewys Glyn Cothi to Oswestry, turns out to be primarily in praise of a prominent individual within that town, Meredudd ap Hywel, whose uncle Geoffrey Kyffin held the post of constable of Oswestry.<sup>6</sup> Other poems may focus on one particular aspect of a town, such as that by Dafydd ap Gwilym to the rood at Carmarthen, and that by Ieuan ap Huw Cae Llwyd to the rood at Brecon in the late fifteenth century,<sup>7</sup> both of which focus on the towns’ religious importance as centres of pilgrimage, a type of poem discussed in Catherine McKenna’s chapter in this volume. A more materialistic note is struck by Ieuan ap Gruffudd Leiaf in his praise of the beer of Conwy discussed below.

Other poems in praise of towns may have been lost because no individual family had an interest in their preservation, although the extent of such losses is not likely to have been significant. One lost poem can be identified on the basis of Guto’r Glyn’s reference to the early fifteenth-century poet Owain Waed Da having been made a burgess of Oswestry in return for a poem he composed.<sup>8</sup> Guto was no doubt familiar with the poem in question, perhaps from memorial transmission, and his reference to it is an indication of the value of precedent and tradition for these poets, particular in the case of a marginal genre like praise of a town.

The earliest-known poem in praise of a town is that by Dafydd ap Gwilym in the mid-fourteenth century to Newborough in Anglesey, which had been established to accommodate the Welsh inhabitants of Llan-faes displaced to make way for the building of Beaumaris.<sup>9</sup> This is followed by four poems to Oswestry, by Guto’r Glyn and Lewys Glyn Cothi around the middle of the fifteenth century,<sup>10</sup> by Tudur Aled about the end of the fifteenth century,<sup>11</sup> and by Siôn Ceri in the first half of the sixteenth century.<sup>12</sup> Even though Oswestry

was in the Marches, and subsequently in England, it need be no surprise that the town features so prominently in Welsh praise poetry since the Welsh element in its population increased gradually during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and by the early Tudor period the inhabitants were predominantly Welsh.<sup>13</sup>

Helen Fulton has recently argued that the Welsh poems belong to the classical genre known as *encomium urbis*, praise of cities, which featured in rhetorical textbooks from the time of Quintilian in the first century ad.<sup>14</sup> In the Middle Ages the merging of classical and Christian traditions led to a particular emphasis on cities as locations of religious establishments and centres of piety. Standard elements of the rhetorical models included the founder of the city, its situation, fortifications, public buildings, churches, citizens and their standard of living, but the fact that most of these elements feature in the Welsh poems does not in itself prove that their authors were consciously following the conventions of an international literary genre. These poems could also be an expression of a sense of civic pride and aspiration to urban ideals which were common to all the countries of Europe by the later Middle Ages, even though differences in material prosperity and political power led to some stark contrasts in scale.

The question of scale raises a difficult issue with regard to Dafydd ap Gwilym's poem in praise of Newborough. Fulton has argued that in this poem there is deliberate ironic humour in the use of a rhetorical genre normally reserved for the great cities of Europe such as Rome, Paris and London, to describe a tiny town in north Wales. Such irony could only have been effective if the poet and his audience were familiar with the rhetorical models, but we have no way of proving that assumption.<sup>15</sup> The same problem of scale applies to only a slightly lesser degree in the case of Oswestry, and since there are no clear internal indications of irony or mockery of bourgeois pretensions in these poems I will assume henceforth that they were intended as straightforward praise.

Another possible area of complexity in Dafydd ap Gwilym's poem is the question of Newborough's ethnic identity and political allegiance. This is primarily a matter of naming, since the town had quite separate English and Welsh names. The rhetorical address in the opening couplet employs a Cymricized form which gives some idea of how the original English name was pronounced:

Hawddamawr, mireinwawr, maith,

Dref Niwbwrch, drefn iawn obaith.<sup>16</sup>

Eternal greetings to the radiant town of Newborough whose buildings are a source of true hope.

As already noted, the name Newborough was entirely appropriate from the English perspective since the town was established in the wake of the

Edwardian conquest in order to make room for the building of Beaumaris. However, the location already had a Welsh name, Rhosyr (< *Rhos Fair*), being the site of one of the royal courts of Gwynedd and a *maerdref* which seems to have already been a trading centre.<sup>17</sup> The town is referred to by its Welsh name at the beginning of the second paragraph of the poem, ‘Cornel ddiddos yw Rhosyr’ (‘Rhosyr is a cosy corner’),<sup>18</sup> and in another poem by Dafydd ap Gwilym located in Newborough (discussed below) Rhosyr is the only name used. It may well be, as Fulton suggested,<sup>19</sup> that naming the town first in English and then in Welsh was a way of drawing attention to the fact that it had a history in the Welsh context even though the conquerors regarded it as a new town. However, it should not be assumed that the townspeople would necessarily identify with such a history, since the name of the town was actually changed in 1305 from Rhosyr to Newborough by petition of the burgesses themselves, a petition which also claimed that the town was established for Englishmen.<sup>20</sup> It appears that there was tension between the original inhabitants of Rhosyr and new English burgesses, and it was perhaps to the former group that Dafydd ap Gwilym’s poem was primarily addressed.

In the couplet following the Welsh name Rhosyr the town is described as a royal place (*lle brenhinawl*).<sup>21</sup> This could have been understood in two very different ways depending on the political perspective of the audience. Those conscious of its Welsh history would doubtless have taken it as a reference to the former royal court on the site, but it could also have been taken to refer to the English crown whose royal charter formally confirmed the privileges of the town in 1303.<sup>22</sup> The irony of this potential ambiguity is typical of Dafydd ap Gwilym’s poetry.

Another typical feature of Dafydd ap Gwilym’s poetry which colours the depiction of the town is the technique known as *dyfalu*, that is metaphorical description by reference to objects of similar appearance, a technique which can cause some confusion if not properly interpreted. For instance, in line 26 the town is referred to as a *castell*. There was no castle at Newborough, and the point of the metaphor is that the town has the appearance of a castle due to its fortified walls. As Dylan Foster Evans shows in his chapter in this volume, the metaphor would certainly have had double-edged significance in post-conquest Wales, but here it represents a place of security and privilege. Similar visual metaphors representing the rounded enclosure formed by the town walls are *coetgae*, land enclosed by a hedge, *côr*, the chancel of a church, *rhod*, a wheel or circle, *pentan*, a hearth or chimney-corner, and, most imaginatively, *buarth baban*, a baby pen. Another theme is enclosures of fruitful abundance, the pantry, the orchard, and the legendary cauldron of rebirth, *pair dadeni*. All these metaphors seem almost to make a virtue of the town’s small scale to convey a sense of snugness and childlike contentment.

The fifteenth-century poets do not employ this metaphorical mode of description in their praise of towns,<sup>23</sup> but they do convey the same impression

of a secure and well-rounded enclosure. Tudur Aled depicts the castled town of Oswestry from the perspective of the approaching traveller:

Gwal ar byrth, gwelir o bell,  
Gorchestol gaer a chastell,  
Mur tan gamp, mae'r tai'n gwmpas,  
Fal yn gron, Fwlen y gras;  
Uwch i'r wybr no chaer Ebryw,  
Ar rwndwal Ieirll Arndel yw.<sup>24</sup>

A wall over gates, seen from afar, magnificent fort and castle, splendid wall, the houses are in a circle, as if round, Boulogne of grace; reaching higher to the sky than Jerusalem, it rests on the foundation of the Earls of Arundel.

The praise poems to towns emphasize their high standard of living and the abundance of exotic goods, particularly food and drink, a theme which is central to all praise poetry to the Welsh gentry who were consumers of the luxury produce of town markets and industries. The impression is given that this is all freely available due to the generosity of the burgesses, which it no doubt was as patronage to poets on occasions. The commercial basis of urban consumerism is not generally foregrounded in the poetry, but it is sometimes acknowledged, as in this couplet by Tudur Aled which contains a telling borrowing from English commercial discourse:

Pob wâr o ddaear ddierth,  
Pob bath win, pob peth i werth.

Every ware from foreign lands, every kind of wine, every thing for sale.

Alcohol is particularly prominent, and it is perhaps no accident that both Dafydd ap Gwilym and Guto'r Glyn specify wine, beer and mead in the opening paragraphs of their poems to Newborough and Oswestry. Taverns were a feature of urban life which would have been particularly attractive to incomers on market and fair days, as they continued to be in the market towns of Wales until modern times. Lewys Glyn Cothi celebrates individual largesse within the context of urban commerce by recounting how Meredudd ap Hywel would take the men of his retinue to a *gwindy* (wine-house) in Oswestry and pay for all they drank.<sup>25</sup> The importance of the beverage trade is evident in a *cywydd* by Ieuan ap Gruffudd Leiaf, a poet active in the first half of the fifteenth century, celebrating the beer (*cwrw*) of Conwy.<sup>26</sup> The focus is not so much on the quality of the local beer, as one might expect, but rather on the variety of beers available in this trading port from different towns in Wales and the Marches, including Haverfordwest, Hereford, Shrewsbury, Ludlow and Weobley.

The celebration of consumerism and pleasures of the flesh is counterbalanced to varying degrees in the praise poems by attention to the religious establishments of the towns. This is partly an aesthetic appreciation of their architecture, like Dafydd ap Gwilym's description of Newborough's church



as *glwysteg deml* ('lovely temple' – the only religious reference in that poem). All the poems in praise of Oswestry convey a strong sense of religious devotion in the town, whilst also celebrating the magnificence of its church. Guto'r Glyn has a noteworthy passage associating the religious life of the town with the cultivation of learning at the grammar school, founded in the first quarter of the fifteenth century, the earliest in Wales:

Ysgol rad, ddisglair ydyw,  
A thref i'r pregethwyr yw,  
A gwŷr mydr a gramadeg  
Yn teimlo Duw mewn teml deg;  
Gorau eglwys gareglwych  
A'i horgan achlân a'i chlych,  
Gorau côr a gwŷr cywraint  
O gŵyr a gwisg hyd Gaer-gaint.<sup>27</sup>

It is a bright, free school, and it is a town for the preachers, and for poets and scholars who handle God in a fair temple; the best fine-chaliced church with her entire organ and her bells, the best chancel and skilled men in terms of wax candles and clothing as far as Canterbury.

A crucial aspect of the urban ideal presented in these poems is the idea of unity and concord between all the inhabitants of the town. This is apparent in a couplet which occurs in almost exactly the same form in the poems to Oswestry by both Guto'r Glyn and Lewys Glyn Cothi:

Yndi mae marsiandi'r Sieb  
A chordiad a chywirdeb.<sup>28</sup>

In it there is the merchandise of Cheapside and concord and fidelity.

This may be a case of deliberate or even unconscious borrowing of a memorable couplet, but the second line is so thematically significant that it could have been created independently by the two poets.<sup>29</sup> Tudur Aled presents the concord in class terms, and his appeal for the blessing of the saints is perhaps an indication that the ideal was not always achieved by the Tudor period (if indeed it ever had been):

Dinas, maer dawnus a'i medd,  
Dau sersiant dewis orsedd.  
Pell yw sôn dynion gan dant,  
Pawb, am wrsib, pob marsiant.  
Crefftwyr, llafurwyr, llaw Fair,  
Cedwyn, Non, i'w cadw'n unair!<sup>30</sup>

City, a gifted mayor governs it, two sergeants of a choice seat. Minstrels sing of it far and wide, everyone, for honour, every merchant. Craftsmen, labourers,

may the hand of Mary, Cedwyn and Non keep them in accord!

The ideal of concord also extended to relationships between Welsh and English in the towns, at least according to the selective view of the praise poems. ‘Y ddewistref ddiestron’ (‘The choice native [literally ‘non-foreign’] town’) is the opening line of Ieuan ap Gruffudd Leiaf’s praise of Conwy,<sup>31</sup> and whilst that is a very positive statement it is also a tacit acknowledgement that not all towns in medieval Wales could be regarded as Welsh. In his poem to the rood at Carmarthen Dafydd ap Gwilym refers to the inhabitants of the town as *Deifr Saesnectref* (‘English of a Saxon [*or* English-speaking] town’).<sup>32</sup>

Further evidence of Conwy’s Welshness is provided by this claim in a poem by Lewys Môn to Huw Bulkeley, who was probably constable of the town, like his father before him, at the end of the fifteenth century:

Y dre a’r wlad, yn ordr lân,

Yn un iaith a wnawn weithian.<sup>33</sup>

We now make the town and the country one language/people in good order.

The reference is to the long-standing divide between predominantly English towns and the Welsh countryside surrounding them, and the fact that *iaith* could mean both language and people makes this an apparently potent statement of ethnic unity, but since the change is attributed to the leadership of one individual it must be treated with caution as historical evidence. Nevertheless, there are some indications in the poetry of a gradual dissolution of old divisions, particularly by the later fifteenth century. Lewys Glyn Cothi is probably referring to the penal laws which came into force during the Glyn Dŵr rebellion, prohibiting Welshmen from becoming burgesses in English towns in Wales or from holding offices in them, when he says of Oswestry:

Ni fyn annefod a fu,

Nac amraint, Lundain Gymru.<sup>34</sup>

It does not want the misrule that once was, nor breach of privilege, the London of Wales.

In a poem to Hywel Prains (Prenche), a merchant of Cowbridge, thanking him for a gift of prayer-beads, Lewys presents a very positive relationship between the town and its surrounding region, probably in the last quarter of the fifteenth century. The use of both English and Welsh forms of the town’s name recalls Dafydd ap Gwilym’s poem to Newborough:

Brysio mae’r byd a’r bresen

o dir y wlad i’r wal wen,

a brau isod y brysiaf,

broasio gwin Cwbris a gaf.

Yn y Bont-faen mae blaenawr,

o’r Mars hwnt mae’r marsiant mawr,

Hywel Prains, ni ochel pryd,  
ni ochel win a iechyd;  
addas ydiw ei oddef  
o Dir y Iarll ar y dref.<sup>35</sup>

All the people of this world are hurrying from the countryside to the white wall, and I too hurry swiftly down, I get to broach the wine of Cowbridge. In y *Bont-faen* there is a leader, the great merchant is from the March yonder, Hywel Prenche, he does not avoid a feast, nor wine and health; it is right to accept him from Llangynwyd [in authority] over the town.

The poem goes on to compare Hywel to the famous fifteenth-century merchants William Canynges, who was mayor of Bristol, and Richard Whittington, mayor of London.

Guto'r Glyn dramatizes the incursion of Welshness into the town of Oswestry as his own lived experience:

Yn ieuanc bûm flaeneuwr,  
Weithian, tuag oedran gŵr,  
Natur i hen, yno y trig,  
Ddwyn oes mewn tref ddinesig.<sup>36</sup>

I was a man from the hill country when I was young, now in his maturity it is natural for an old man to spend his life in a civic town, there he will stay.

Guto composed his poem in return for the privilege of burgess-ship in Oswestry, and he refers in it to a similar poem (which has not survived) by Owain Waed Da a generation earlier, just as Tudur Aled of the following generation refers to Guto's poem.<sup>37</sup> Not only were Welsh poets becoming accepted as members of the civic community, but also their work, and by extension Welsh culture in general, was recognized as having validity and commercial value in the urban context.

However, that was certainly not the case in all the towns of fifteenth-century Wales, as Tudur Penllyn graphically demonstrated in a poem complaining about the English of Flint who preferred the performance of a piper to his Welsh poetry.<sup>38</sup> Satires of this kind function in direct opposition to the praise poetry, reversing all its ideals in exaggeratedly dystopic fashion with a strong vein of ritual cursing. Towns feature fairly prominently in the body of fourteenth-century satirical verse preserved in the Red Book of Hergest (c.1400). Prydydd Breuan's mock-elegy to a harpist known as Darre begins *Trefydd a gyrchaf* ('I will go to towns'), which brings to mind Dafydd ap Gwilym's vow to stay away from bad towns. Darre is lampooned mainly for his gluttony, which is specifically associated with the town of Carmarthen: *Llonaid Caerfyrddin oedd ei giniaw* ('His dinner was the fill of Carmarthen').<sup>39</sup> A woman by the name of Siwan Morgan of Aberteifi (Cardigan) was the subject of a vicious attack by Prydydd Breuan for having deceived him, and there is a

tantalizing suggestion that she was involved in commerce.<sup>40</sup> The towns of Rhaeadr Gwy and Llandovery are subjects of two short and frustratingly unspecific satires by Dafydd y Coed.<sup>41</sup>

Of more interest is Lewys Glyn Cothi's splendidly vituperative cursing of the townspeople of Chester (Caerlleon), supposedly in retaliation for ill-treatment he had received there, because it is clearly a deliberate denial of the urban ideals as presented in the praise poetry. Chester's situation is said to be unhealthy, its immigrants only despised Irishmen, its burgesses poverty-stricken, greedy and sinful:

Tref y saith bechod heb neb dlodach,  
tref gaerog fylchog heb neb falchach,  
tref sieb glothineb, golythenach – bryd,  
tref lle cyfyd llyd a phob lledach.<sup>42</sup>

Town of the seven sins, poorest of all, town with battlemented [or breached] walls, haughtiest of all, market town of gluttony, feeding on scraps of meat, town rife with riots and ignobility.

A more nuanced expression of antipathy towards urban culture is to be found in a poem by Gruffudd ab Adda, a contemporary of Dafydd ap Gwilym in the mid-fourteenth century, addressed to a birch tree which had been set up as a maypole in the town of Llanidloes. The birch was traditionally associated with lovers' woodland trysts (which is why it was used as a maypole), and the poem sets up a powerful opposition between the harmonious seclusion of the tree's natural habitat and the crowded marketplace where it now withers. Although the town is acknowledged to be a place of high status, its mercantile function is described contemptuously as *cyfnewid rwydd* ('easy commerce'), and the birch is personified as a merchant:

I borthmonaeth y'th wnaethpwyd,  
Mal ar sud maelieres wyd:  
Pawb o'r ffair, eurair oroen,  
A ddengys â bys dy boen,  
I'th unbais lwyd a'th henban,  
Ymysg marsiandiaeth mân.<sup>43</sup>

You have been put to commerce, in the likeness of a merchantess: everyone at the fair – fine-sounding word – points a finger at your plight, in your one grey coat and your old fur, amongst trifling merchandise.

It is easy enough to interpret this as an expression of rural resentment of the commercial privileges of the market towns, and the poem would no doubt have found a ready audience amongst the Welsh landed gentry who were patrons of the love poetry made popular by Dafydd ap Gwilym and others. Much of that poetry can be seen as an implicit rejection of urban culture in that it presents

wild nature as the ideal setting for love, but two comic narratives by Dafydd ap Gwilym engage more specifically with urban environments.<sup>44</sup>

‘Sarhau ei Was’ (‘Degradation of his Servant’) is set in Newborough on the festival of the patron saint of the parish, St Peter (29 June). In contrast to Dafydd’s praise poem to Newborough which uses both the English and Welsh forms of the town’s name, only the Welsh form is used here. The festival is presented in the opening lines as an occasion for the people of the town and the surrounding region to display themselves in all their finery, to see and be seen:

Gŵyl Bedr y bûm yn edrych

Yn Rhosyr, lle aml gwŷr gwych,

Ar drwsiad pobl, aur drysor,

A gallu Môn gerllaw môr.<sup>45</sup>

On St Peter’s Day I was in Newborough, a place full of magnificent men, looking at people’s attire, golden treasure, and the host of Angelesey by the sea. The poet’s admiring gaze then settles on a beautiful girl who is an object of fascination for everyone. He seems to lose his personal volition, carried along by the communal will of the crowd to follow her at a distance. When she goes into a stone building, presumably a public hostelry, he is surrounded by a throng of revellers, and his decision to send the girl a gift of wine is surely meant to impress them as much as her:

Troes ugain i’m traws ogylch

O’m cyd-wtreswyr i’m cylch.

Prid i’r unben a’i chwennyich,

Profais y gwin, prif was gwych;

Prynais, gwaith ni bu fodlawn,

Ar naid ddau alwynaid lawn.<sup>46</sup>

Twenty of my co-revellers came and gathered in a circle around me. Expensive for the lord who desires it, I tried some wine, high-class young man; I bought two full gallons at one go, unfortunate deed.

When presented with the wine the girl makes a telling exclamation: *Pond cyffredin y dinas?* (‘Isn’t the town vulgar?’). On being told that the wine is a gift from the poet Dafydd ap Gwilym she pours it over his servant’s head. The poem ends with Dafydd’s curses on the girl for her disrespect.

Like many of Dafydd ap Gwilym’s poems, this enigmatic piece can provoke various responses. When Dafydd himself recited it some of his audience might have agreed that the girl’s behaviour was churlish, but many would just have laughed at his humiliation. Modern readers are more likely to sympathize with the girl’s indignation at being wooed by a complete stranger. But, of course, she herself is no innocent, being implicated in that culture of ostentation which was essential to the urban festival. The sense of the town as a public space where

individuals are part of a crowd and exposed to the common gaze is a key theme in this poem, summed up by the thematic term *cyffredin* which occurs in all three of Dafydd's urban poems. It is used here by the girl in the negative sense of 'common, vulgar', but in the praise poem to Newborough, where it is linked again by *cynganedd lusg* to *dinas*, it is used as a noun in the sense of 'commonalty', the townspeople as a group.<sup>47</sup> And in 'Trafferth mewn Tafarn', as will be seen, *llety cyffredin* is the term for the public lodging-house which is the location of the action.

Another aspect of town life highlighted by the narrative of 'Sarhau ei Was' is the availability of consumer goods for purchase, what Gruffudd ab Adda calls *cyfnewid rwydd*. In the passage just quoted we see Dafydd tasting the wine before making an impulse purchase of two whole gallons at considerable expense. When he declares at the end of the poem that he will never again give the girl so much as a spoonful of lukewarm water, there is a clear implication that she should have repayed his expenditure by her favour. The link between commerce and sexual relationships is one which Dafydd develops in poems to two married women whose husbands were associated with the town of Aberystwyth.

One of the four women who feature in Dafydd's poem 'Dewis Un o Bedair' ('Choosing One of Four') is Elen, wife of Robin Nordd, alias Robert le Northern, a burgess of Aberystwyth in the 1340s.<sup>48</sup> Elen's faulty Welsh marks her out as one of the English of the town, and the descriptions of her as 'fond of wealth', 'lady of wool' and 'queen of cloth-houses' clearly indicate that she and her husband were involved in the cloth trade. She is said to pay Dafydd for a poem with woollen socks, and it is implied that she would give him medley cloth in return for sexual satisfaction should he so wish. But Elen's purchasing power did not extend that far, and she was not the chosen one of the four.

Neither was Morfudd, a girl with whom Dafydd had a relationship both before and after she married, if the evidence of his poems is to be believed. The bitter outcome of that relationship is expressed in significantly commercial terms in 'Dewis Un o Bedair', using the same adjective which described the costly wine in 'Sarhau ei Was':

Cyd bu brid ein newid ni,  
Prid oedd i'r priod eiddi.<sup>49</sup>

Although our exchange was costly for us, it was costly for her husband too.

Morfudd was married to a man nicknamed 'y Bwa Bach' (probably referring to a physical deformity, 'the little crooked one'), whose name occurs as a witness on a document of 1342 relating to the theft of a silver cup from Robert le Northern. He features prominently in 'Dyddgu a Morfudd', a poem in which Dafydd purports to compare the two girls, although in fact the section on Morfudd has more to say about her husband.<sup>50</sup> Frustrated by the husband's jealous guarding of his wife as if she were a piece of property, and his

unwillingness to 'lend' her, Dafydd proposes to buy himself a wife and swap her for Morfudd. The use of commercial discourse in the section on Morfudd (she herself is said to be the 'owner' of a house and a husband) is in stark contrast to the preceding description of Dyddgu, the daughter of a Cardiganshire nobleman, whose speech is said to be like that of an inheritor of land and whose virginal state is likened to untilled land, the very basis of the wealth which was to be inherited by marriage to her. Although this poem makes no mention of any town, the comparison which it makes between the two girls is extremely suggestive of the cultural differences between the landed gentry and the merchants of the towns.

'Trafferth mewn Tafarn' ('Trouble at an Inn') draws attention to its urban setting in the opening line, *Deuthum i ddinas dethol* ('I came to a choice town'), but unfortunately no town is named. Since the story is undoubtedly fictional this need be no surprise, but on the other hand 'Sarhau ei Was' is surely fictional too and yet it is located in Newborough. The two poems are closely related thematically, as will be seen, and it is therefore tempting to imagine that 'Trafferth mewn Tafarn' is also located in Newborough. The only consideration which might make that more than idle speculation is the manuscript tradition of the poem. None of the surviving copies are earlier than the second half of the sixteenth century, over two hundred years after Dafydd ap Gwilym's lifetime, which suggests a long period of oral transmission, and the geographical distribution of the manuscript copies is more strongly focused on north-west Wales than any of Dafydd's other poems (including 'Sarhau ei Was' and 'Niwbwrch').<sup>51</sup>

Like 'Sarhau ei Was', the story of 'Trafferth mewn Tafarn' involves an attempt by the first-person narrator to woo a stranger, although the girl in this case is much more willing. The poet adopts the persona of a proud young nobleman who seeks to impress by his grandiose behaviour. On arriving in the unnamed town accompanied by his handsome squire he takes lodging at a public inn where he sees a pretty girl whom he sets out to seduce, ordering expensive wine and roast meat, and arranges to come to her bed when all the other occupants of the inn have gone to sleep. But in the darkness he trips over a stool, knocking over a tableful of pots and pans, which wakes up everyone else in the room, including three English tinkers who think he is trying to steal their goods. The poet ends up sneaking back to his own bed and praying to God for forgiveness.

The use of a persona is a standard technique in Dafydd ap Gwilym's work which leads to a bewildering variety of different characters in his poetry, but in this case it is particularly important to distinguish between poet and persona because the narrator uses language in a boastful manner but with unintentional ambiguity which undercuts his pretensions. I have set out this interpretation in detail elsewhere, and will concentrate here on those ambiguities which relate specifically to the urban setting.<sup>52</sup>



The use of the term *dinas* in the first line raises a question about connotations of terminology. There were two words available to denote town in Middle Welsh, *tref* and *dinas*. At first sight these appear to be equivalent and interchangeable in the poetry, both being used in Dafydd ap Gwilym's praise poem to Newborough for instance. However, the two words have quite different semantic histories, and the poetry in fact contains evidence of a shift during the later Middle Ages towards the Modern Welsh usage of *tref* for town and *dinas* for city. The original meaning of *tref* was 'habitation, homestead' (also denoting a division of the *maenol* in the Welsh laws).<sup>53</sup> The earliest usage denoting a town seems to be one with reference to Kidwelly by the poet Llywarch ap Llywelyn in a praise poem to Llywelyn ab Iorwerth in 1217.<sup>54</sup> *Dinas* originally meant 'fortress, stronghold', as evidenced in place-names referring to hillforts such as Dinas Emrys and Dinas Dinlle.<sup>55</sup> In that sense it was clearly appropriate to denote a town, especially one with fortifications, and for a time it seems that *tref* and *dinas* were synonyms.<sup>56</sup> However, *tref* appears to have been established as the normal word for town by the middle of the fourteenth century, as seen in Dafydd ap Gwilym's rhetorical address to *tref Niwbwrch*,<sup>57</sup> as well as his vow to keep away from *trefydd drwg*.<sup>58</sup> *Dinas* was still available to the poets for variety and metrical effect, but it is likely to have had a rather grandiloquent ring to it – something like 'citadel' perhaps. It is used twice by Guto'r Glyn of Oswestry, once by Tudur Aled, and not at all by Lewys Glyn Cothi or Siôn Ceri.<sup>59</sup> The phrase *tref ddinesig*, 'civic or municipal town', which occurs twice in Guto'r Glyn's praise of Oswestry is an interesting combination of the two terms which does not seem to have gained any currency.<sup>60</sup> Guto also uses *dinastref*, a compound which occurs twice in thirteenth-century prose.<sup>61</sup>

The adjective *dethol* which describes *dinas* in the opening line of 'Trafferth mewn Tafarn' is clearly intended by the narrator in the very positive sense of 'choice, refined', but it is a very pertinent case of ambiguity because *dethol* also occurs as a variant form of the verbal noun *deol*, 'banish, exclude'.<sup>62</sup> In fact, the semantic distance between the two elements of this ambiguity is not very great since both can be encompassed by the English word 'exclusive'. Exclusivity was an essential feature of medieval towns in that municipal privileges were restricted to burgesses. As a visitor to the town the narrator would not have enjoyed any privileges, and he is open to suspicion, as becomes apparent later in the poem when he is taken for a thief by the English merchants. However, it would be a mistake to take the three Englishmen as evidence that the town was an anglicized place, since they too are travellers, not burgesses of the town. As seen elsewhere in his poetry, Dafydd's attitude towards them is one of contempt for social inferiors.

The narrator takes lodging at a public hostelry which he refers to as *llety . . . cyffredin*. The range of meaning of *cyffredin* has already been noted, and both the positive and negative aspects are evident here. The opportunity for the

chance sexual encounter only arises because the hostelry is open to all, but on the other hand the narrator's plans go awry because of the proximity of strangers, presumably sleeping in the same room. The need to take such a lodging was no doubt a blow to the narrator's pride, and splitting the phrase over two lines by the insertion of the qualifying phrase *urddedig ddigawn* ('dignified enough') seems to be an attempt to inflate the status of the place.

Food and drink figure prominently in the first part of the poem, both as status symbols and as part of the narrator's plan of seduction. As in 'Sarhau ei Was', the availability of consumer goods on demand is a key factor in the action. The first reference to food, *Ile cwyn hydrum* in line 3, is a blatant piece of ambiguity involving two homonyms. The narrator must be using *cwyn* < Latin *cena*, 'dinner, banquet', in which case the phrase means 'place of excellent dinner'. This *cwyn* is not attested after the fourteenth century, and may well have had a rather antiquated and pretentious air.<sup>63</sup> One reason for its demise might have been pressure from its homonym meaning 'complaint'. The phrase would then mean 'place of strong complaint', which is particularly apposite in view of the narrator's subsequent experience, and the experience of many visitors to medieval towns.

The wine which the narrator buys to impress (and intoxicate) the girl is said to be *drud*, 'expensive', thus corresponding to the wine bought in 'Sarhau ei Was' which is *prid*.<sup>64</sup> But although *drud* and *prid* are synonyms (the latter being a south-Walian dialect word today), *drud* is a far more complex term whose essential meaning is moral rather than material.<sup>65</sup> The earliest examples refer to human character, in a positive sense 'daring, valiant' and in a negative sense 'reckless, foolhardy' or 'harsh, ruthless'. The meaning 'expensive' seems to have been a secondary development attested from the fourteenth century onwards, and the core concept which links it with these moral senses is that of excess. The narrator wanted to tell his audience that he had spent a lot of money on seducing the girl, but he unwittingly draws attention to his reckless excess. And that excess involves more than just expenditure on wine. When things start to go wrong the narrator comes out with a series of rueful asides, one of which is *drygioni drud*. This could be understood as 'costly wickedness',<sup>66</sup> but in this moral context 'reckless' is a more compelling sense. And if the moral implications of the first instance of *drud* had been missed they would surely have become apparent in the light of this second instance.

'Trafferth mewn Tafarn' and 'Sarhau ei Was' cast ironic light on the praise poetry to towns, not by reversing its ideals as the satires do, but rather by drawing out their consequences and contradictions. The ideal of harmonious commonality is undermined by the haughty girl's indignation at being approached by one of the crowd to whom she had been displaying herself. Cultural hostility becomes apparent as Welsh and English are thrown together in the public space of the hostelry, but this is equally a matter of social conflict between nobleman and tradesmen. The availability of consumer goods,

especially alcohol, is precisely as celebrated in the praise poetry (with the proviso that the commercial basis is more apparent here), but their consumption is placed within a nexus of sinful behaviour involving pride and ostentation, gluttony and drunkenness leading to lechery. ‘Trafferth mewn Tafarn’ in particular has a clear vein of moral discourse drawing attention to the narrator’s sins with echoes of the *exemplum*.<sup>67</sup> Profane misappropriation of religious expressions is apparent in both poems, one girl being likened to the living image of Mary and the other called *f’ un enaid teg* (‘my fair soul’) and *gwyn fy myd* (‘my blessing’).<sup>68</sup> The breathtaking cynicism of the narrator’s sudden piety at the end of ‘Trafferth mewn Tafarn’ cannot but impress upon the audience how thoroughly this poem has undermined the ideal of the town as a centre of religious devotion.

This is the burden of meaning borne by the adjective *drwg* when Dafydd ap Gwilym declares to Ifor Hael that he will go no more to the bad towns, but it would be naive to take his declaration at its face value. Poems such as ‘Trafferth mewn Tafarn’ would have found a ready audience at Ifor’s court, and the townspeople of Newborough would no doubt have enjoyed the comedy of ‘Sarhau ei Was’ as much as the praise of ‘Niwbwrch’, although whether they would have appreciated that the former could undermine the latter is open to question.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Quotation from [www.dafyddapgwilym.net](http://www.dafyddapgwilym.net) [DG.net], no. 14, ll. 15–20 (edited and translated by Huw M. Edwards). Note that in line 10 of the same poem Ifor is located in relation to the most important town of the region, *uwch Caerdyf* (‘beyond [i.e. to the east of ] Cardiff’).

<sup>2</sup>I am indebted to the work of D. J. Bowen, ‘Dafydd ap Gwilym a’r trefydd drwg’, in J. E. Caerwyn Williams (ed.), *Ysgrifau Beirniadol X* (Dinbych, 1977), 190–220, and Helen Fulton, ‘Trading places: Representations of urban culture in medieval Welsh poetry’, *Studia Celtica*, 31 (1997), 219–31, and to Professor Fulton’s subsequent work in this field (see note 14 below).

<sup>3</sup>Text and translation in Dafydd Johnston (ed.), *Iolo Goch: Poems* (Llandysul, 1993), no. 14, ll. 32–4.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. A. Cynfael Lake (ed.), *Gwaith Siôn Ceri* (Aberystwyth, 1996), no. 51, l. 42, ‘Baradwystraul bwrdeistref’ (also describing Newtown).

<sup>5</sup>See Barry J. Lewis, ‘Genre and the praise of place in late medieval Wales’, in *Akten des XIII. ICCS* (Bonn, 2010), pp. 1–12.

<sup>6</sup>Dafydd Johnston (ed.), *Gwaith Lewys Glyn Cothi* (Caerdydd, 1995), no. 208.

<sup>7</sup>DG.net, no. 1 (edited and translated by Dafydd Johnston); Leslie Harries (ed.), *Gwaith Huw Cae Llwyd ac Eraill* (Cardiff, 1953), no. 51.

<sup>8</sup>J. Llywelyn Williams and Ifor Williams (eds), *Gwaith Guto’r Glyn* (second edn, Cardiff, 1961), no. 69, ll. 53–6. On Owain Waed Da see Barry J. Lewis

(ed.), *Gwaith Madog Benfras ac Eraill o Feirdd y Bedwaredd Ganrif ar Ddeg* (Aberystwyth, 2007), pp. 239–65.

<sup>9</sup>DG.net, no. 18. On Newborough see Ian Soulsby, *The Towns of Medieval Wales* (Chichester, 1983), pp. 194–6, and A. D. Carr, *Medieval Anglesey* (Llangefni, 1982), pp. 258–65.

<sup>10</sup>*Gwaith Guto'r Glyn*, no. 69; *Gwaith Lewys Glyn Cothi*, no. 208.

<sup>11</sup>T. Gwynn Jones (ed.), *Gwaith Tudur Aled* (Cardiff, 1926), no. 65; Thomas Parry (ed.), *The Oxford Book of Welsh Verse* (Oxford, 1962), no. 92.

<sup>12</sup>*Gwaith Siôn Ceri*, no. 52. Siôn Ceri also sang the praise of Newtown, *Gwaith Siôn Ceri*, no. 51.

<sup>13</sup>See Llinos Beverley Smith, 'Oswestry', in R. A. Griffiths (ed.), *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales* (Cardiff, 1978), pp. 218–242, on p. 233.

<sup>14</sup>Helen Fulton, 'Y cywyddwyr a'r *encomium urbis* Cymreig', *Dwned*, 12 (2006), 49–71; Helen Fulton, 'The *encomium urbis* in medieval Welsh poetry', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 26 (2006), 54–72.

<sup>15</sup>The only reference in the Welsh bardic grammars which might be taken to include praise of cities or towns is the mention of place (*lle* or *cyfle*) as one of the physical objects of praise alongside men and animals. See G. J. Williams and E. J. Jones (eds), *Gramadegau'r Penceirddiaid* (Cardiff, 1934), pp. 15, 34, 55.

<sup>16</sup>DG.net, no. 18, ll. 1–2. Text edited and translated by A. Cynfael Lake. On Welsh *bwrch* from Middle English *burch*, *burgh* see T. H. Parry-Williams, *The English Element in Welsh* (London, 1923), p. 35.

<sup>17</sup>Carr, *Medieval Anglesey*, pp. 258–9.

<sup>18</sup>DG.net, no. 18, l. 7.

<sup>19</sup>'Y cywyddwyr a'r *encomium urbis* Cymreig', p. 51.

<sup>20</sup>Carr, *Medieval Anglesey*, pp. 259–60.

<sup>21</sup>DG.net, no. 18, l. 9. The different line-order of the text in Thomas Parry (ed.), *Gwaith Dafydd ap Gwilym* (Cardiff, 1952; second edn, 1963), no. 134, is the result of editorial emendation.

<sup>22</sup>Carr, *Medieval Anglesey*, p. 259.

<sup>23</sup>This is one reason why I would not accept Fulton's suggestion that the praise of Newborough is a fifteenth-century composition despite the manuscript attributions to Dafydd ap Gwilym, 'Y cywyddwyr a'r *encomium urbis* Cymreig', pp. 70–1.

<sup>24</sup>*Oxford Book of Welsh Verse*, p. 179.

<sup>25</sup>*Gwaith Lewys Glyn Cothi*, no. 208, ll. 55–8. Cf. a similar passage about a patron at a tavern in Caerleon, *ibid*, no. 120, ll. 1–14.

<sup>26</sup>The poem has not yet been edited. For the first line see note 30 below.

<sup>27</sup>The quotation is from a text prepared as part of the Guto'r Glyn Project at

the University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies (2008–12), edited and translated by Eurig Salisbury. Cf. *Gwaith Guto'r Glyn*, no. 69, ll. 23–30.

<sup>28</sup>*Gwaith Lewys Glyn Cothi*, no. 208, ll. 9–10; cf. *Gwaith Guto'r Glyn*, no. 69, ll. 35–6.

<sup>29</sup>The use of the related verb *cordiwch* in Siôn Ceri's praise of Oswestry, *Gwaith Siôn Ceri*, no. 51, l. 44, is probably due to the influence of one or both of the earlier poems.

<sup>30</sup>*Oxford Book of Welsh Verse*, pp. 179–80.

<sup>31</sup>The quotation is from the earliest manuscript text, National Library of Wales MS Wynnstay 1 (c.1570–90), p. 37.

<sup>32</sup>DG.net, no. 1, l. 50.

<sup>33</sup>Eurys I. Rowlands (ed.), *Gwaith Lewys Môn* (Cardiff, 1975), no. 1, ll. 53–4.

<sup>34</sup>*Gwaith Lewys Glyn Cothi*, no. 208, ll. 13–14.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, no. 106, ll. 1–10.

<sup>36</sup>Text edited by Eurig Salisbury, cf. *Gwaith Guto'r Glyn*, no. 69, ll. 1–4.

<sup>37</sup>*Gwaith Guto'r Glyn*, no. 69, ll. 53–6; *Oxford Book of Welsh Verse*, p. 181.

<sup>38</sup>Thomas Roberts (ed.), *Gwaith Tudur Penllyn ac Ieuan ap Tudur Penllyn* (Cardiff, 1958), no. 30.

<sup>39</sup>Huw Meirion Edwards (ed.), *Gwaith Prydydd Breuan, Rhys ap Dafydd ab Einion, Hywel Ystorm, a Cherddi Dychan Dienw o Lyfr Coch Hergest* (Aberystwyth, 2000), no. 2, ll. 1 and 40.

<sup>40</sup>*Gwaith Prydydd Breuan*, no. 3, l. 28, where the poet's description of himself as *gwaeth ei newidiau* could be rendered as 'having the worst of his exchanges'. But Dafydd ap Gwilym uses *newid* of his sexual relationship with Morfudd, see note 49 below.

<sup>41</sup>R. Iestyn Daniel (ed.), *Gwaith Dafydd y Coed a Beirdd Eraill o Lyfr Coch Hergest* (Aberystwyth, 2002), no. 8 and no. 11.

<sup>42</sup>*Gwaith Lewys Glyn Cothi*, no. 215, ll. 77–80. Another savage expression of Welsh hostility towards the people of Chester is Tudur Penllyn's praise of Rheinallt ap Gruffudd of Mold for his violent attack on them (*Gwaith Tudur Penllyn*, no. 12). Both poems are translated on the website 'Mapping Medieval Chester', [www.medievalchester.ac.uk](http://www.medievalchester.ac.uk) [accessed 5 August 2010].

<sup>43</sup>*Oxford Book of Welsh Verse*, p. 91.

<sup>44</sup>A third poem by Dafydd ap Gwilym, 'Lladrata Merch' ('Stealing a Girl') may also be relevant if it is indeed set in a tavern as its editor suggests, DG.net, no. 70, edited and translated by A. Cynfael Lake. In contrast to 'Trafferth mewn Tafarn', it is the girl's husband and his companion who get drunk, allowing the narrator to steal the girl away to the woods.

<sup>45</sup>DG.net, no. 74, ll. 1–4 (text edited and translated by Dafydd Johnston).

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., ll. 23–8.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., no. 18, l. 29.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., no. 120, ll. 13–28 (text edited and translated by A. Cynfael Lake).

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., no. 120, ll. 7–8.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., no. 92 (edited and translated by Dylan Foster Evans).

<sup>51</sup>For details of the manuscripts see DG.net, no. 73 (edited and translated by Dafydd Johnston).

<sup>52</sup>See further Dafydd Johnston, ‘Semantic ambiguity in Dafydd ap Gwilym’s “Trafferth mewn Tafarn”’, *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 56 (Winter 2008), 59–74.

<sup>53</sup>See *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru* (Cardiff, 1950–2002), pp. 3572–3. The later meaning ‘town’ is given as (a) and the earlier one as (b).

<sup>54</sup>Elin M. Jones (ed.), *Gwaith Llywarch ap Llywelyn ‘Prydydd y Moch’* (Cardiff, 1991), no. 25, l. 16. The term *tref* is also used in conjunction with *trefgordd* with reference to Haverfordwest (‘Hawrrfordd’) in line 24, but the Modern Welsh paraphrase renders it as *trigfan* (‘dwelling-place’).

<sup>55</sup>See *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru*, p. 1019.

<sup>56</sup>A nice example of the synonymous relationship is the use of both *dinas* and *tref* to translate the French *cit  * within a few lines of one another in the Welsh translation of *La Geste de Boun de Hamtone*, probably dating from the second half of the thirteenth century. See Morgan Watkin (ed.), *Ystorya Bown de Hamtwn* (Cardiff, 1958), p. 9, ll. 570 and 579.

<sup>57</sup>DG.net, no. 18, l. 2 (also lines 22 and 25).

<sup>58</sup>See note 1 above.

<sup>59</sup>*Caer* in these poems (for example, *Gwaith Guto’r Glyn*, no. 69, l.20) presumably refers to Oswestry Castle.

<sup>60</sup>*Gwaith Guto’r Glyn*, no. 69, l. 4 and l. 9.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., no. 101, l. 46; see *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru*, p. 1020, where it is defined as ‘walled town, city’.

<sup>62</sup>Three instances from the fourteenth century are cited in *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru*, p. 919.

<sup>63</sup>See *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru*, p. 654. The word *did*, however, survive as part of the compound *cwynos*, ‘supper’, *ibid.*, p. 655.

<sup>64</sup>DG.net, no. 73, l. 12, no. 74, l. 25.

<sup>65</sup>See *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru*, p. 1086.

<sup>66</sup>Compare the use of *prid* describing Dafydd’s relationship with Morfudd, DG.net, no. 119, l. 1.

<sup>67</sup>On the influence of the *exemplum* see Bleddyn Owen Huws, “‘Drwg fydd tra awydd’: cywydd “Trafferth mewn Tafarn” Dafydd ap Gwilym a’r bregeth

ganoloesol', *Dwned*, 14 (2008), 89–106.

<sup>68</sup>DG.net, no. 74, l. 10, no. 73, l. 8, l. 10.



## Social Conflict in Welsh Towns c.1280–1530

### Spencer Dimmock

Questions concerning ethnic identity, racial antipathy and the jurisdictional relationship between town and countryside have been at the forefront of discussions regarding urban conflict in medieval Wales. Given that between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries towns were agents in the conquest of Wales by the Anglo-Norman aristocracy and the English crown, and that their free and – before the fifteenth century – mostly alien burgesses were granted urban liberties, racially determined privileges and market monopolies over rural hinterlands and other smaller towns, a focus on these elements of urban conflict in Wales is entirely appropriate.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the key element of social conflict in medieval towns has been a neglected theme in Welsh studies. In order to gain a richer perspective of the urban culture of medieval Wales it is necessary to fill this lacuna.

By social or class conflict I refer to conflict arising from an exploitative relationship between people of unequal economic and political power, and to a dialectic with a key determinate role in social change. The outcomes of struggles between urban classes and between urban communities and their overlords had fundamental implications for towns in medieval England, for example. These struggles determined the extent of self-governing liberty that towns possessed and the extent of check on arbitrary lordship power. They determined the range of social and occupational groups that were represented within town governments and other urban institutions at any particular time. Ultimately, they had implications for the forms and organization of urban production and trade and, as a corollary, for urban growth and decline.<sup>2</sup>

For feudal Marcher lords and the English crown, towns in Wales had an important military function in the progress, consolidation and long-term maintenance of conquest. Equally valuable was their cash-raising function as centres of lordship administration. The extraction of this cash at will, as far as this was possible, from both English and Welsh tenants, rural and urban, provided grist for their enterprises in economic and political accumulation, enterprises in which the Anglo-Norman aristocracy, the English crown, and the Welsh princes before the 1280s, were driven as much by competition as by allied causes. The ability for lords to extract this cash was greater in the March than in England due to the greater independent political and judicial power they wielded in those lordships. It also seems likely that attractive liberties and opportunities for high office in lordship administration ensured that Welsh

towns experienced a greater social polarization *within* them than towns of comparative size in England did, at least before the fifteenth century.<sup>3</sup> So, in theory, in addition to the forms of conflict outlined above there were clearly potential sources for endemic social conflict in Welsh medieval towns.

A number of cases of social conflict have been identified in separate studies of medieval Welsh towns, and yet their significance as a generalized phenomenon has not been explored. What follows is an examination of these (mostly) known cases, and an exploration of potential additional sources of social conflict in medieval Welsh towns.

### *Conflicts between lords and urban communities*

In an early yet still influential analysis of social conflict in medieval Welsh towns, Rees Davies argued that conflict between townspeople in Wales and their overlords was rare because both parties shared an English racial or cultural identity and an interest in exploiting Welsh rural society. Moreover, 'the relationship between burgesses and lord was a close and mutual one', and 'generally the relationship was a happy one; it was bound to be so given the considerable identity of interests between the two parties'. He concedes that 'friction was, of course, inevitable', and he cites struggles over liberties between the townspeople of Haverfordwest and Swansea and their lords in the decades straddling 1300 as examples. But he regards these struggles as exceptions to the rule and he dismisses any general significance that could be read into them. Further in the same analysis he offers another concession. He suggests that while lords granted liberties to English burgesses in Wales, in practice even the simple maintenance of these rights could be challenged. As an example he reveals that Brecon had its important fee-farm liberties, providing for a high level of self-government, confiscated by its lord in 1340. Nevertheless, he reasserts that 'in general . . . relations between lords and towns were good in the March'.<sup>4</sup> Part of the following survey and analysis provides a critique to the foregoing.

To begin with the Brecon case, Davies shows how in the March of Wales the lordship of Brecon 'provides us with one of the finest examples of how lordship could be extended in conditions of peace'.<sup>5</sup> Its lord, earl Humphrey Bohun IV, 'set about it purposefully':

In 1340 he stripped the borough of Brecon of all its privileges and reduced it to the status of a seigniorial vill. His own officials took over the administration of the town and with spectacularly good results: over the next ten years the average annual yield was 40 per cent higher than it was in 1340 . . . Direct lordship was clearly profitable. The Welsh community was treated in the same way as the burgesses.<sup>6</sup>

Bohun's tactics also included violent and illegal territorial consolidation at the expense of his vassals, mostly fellow Anglo-Normans. Taking all of this together Davies argues that 'other Marcher lords no doubt did the same, even if their

measure of success was neither so striking nor so well documented', and 'in general it can hardly be doubted that the elbow room for the extension of seigniorial authority was far greater in the March than in England; the mere size of the lordship and the almost uninhibited power of the lord ensured that it should be so'.<sup>7</sup>

In a detailed study of the town published in the same year, Davies reveals that the farm was returned to the burgesses of Brecon in 1365, and that having been £86 13s. 4d. in 1340 it was raised to £120 by 1370 and to £180 by 1399, the eve of the Glyn Dŵr revolt. He also reveals that the town's liberties were again withdrawn in the later years of Henry IV's reign (c.1410–12), and yet again for a longer period by Anne, Dowager-Countess Stafford (d.1438).<sup>8</sup>

What is striking is the level of arbitrary power at the lord's disposal, and his lack of scruple in removing the capacity of the town to benefit from the revenues derived from its own administration and, beyond that, in levying such a high level of increased revenue from his fellow English townspeople. Also worth noting, given Davies's views on the shared identity and interests of the English in Wales, is the lack of distinction Bohun makes in 1340 between his English and Welsh tenants and the inference that Bohun's actions were replicated by other Marcher lords. Commenting on the later confiscations, rather than pointing to what some historians might view as a punitively exploitative relationship, Davies says they were based on concerns of military security in the first instance and that together 'such confiscations served to remind the burgesses that theirs was a seigniorial borough'. And yet this surely misses the point and generates a perspective too heavily weighted towards the interests and position of the lord. Both cases equally imply a serious opposition of interests between lord and burgess. We have no evidence of open resistance by the townspeople of Brecon to these serious arbitrary actions, though this may simply reflect the sparsity of evidence for the town in this period including an absence of urban corporate record. But it is surely appropriate to speculate that such actions must have caused serious discontent, and it is worth considering the motivations and outlook of Brecon's burgesses and the rest of the townspeople during the Glyn Dŵr revolt in this context.

In the Haverfordwest case cited by Davies, the conflict over the town's liberties between the townspeople and William Valence, earl of Pembroke, was more serious than an example of inevitable friction. The struggle began as early as 1273 and two petitions to the crown in 1282 and 1290 by the burgesses' representatives complain of serious injustices, such as, in 1282, the outlawry of 140 burgesses, imprisonment and the seizure of goods. The crux of the conflict was the level of independence Haverfordwest's burgesses enjoyed from the jurisdiction of the earl of Pembroke. In 1290, the petitioners to the crown on behalf of the burgesses state the following:

They show that on behalf of the entire community of the town, [and] they

complain bitterly concerning William de Valence and Joan, his wife, and their bailiffs of Pembroke, that the Burgesses and their ancestors in the time of the Marshalls were not accustomed to answer outside their borough of Haverford or before any, except the Bailiffs of the borough, in any manner of pleas by writ of right, but now William and his bailiffs distrain them to answer in his County of Pembroke or elsewhere where they will in the County without writ or with writ, which at no time were they accustomed to do. If they do not come to answer, they are imprisoned or put out of their homes or outlawed or amerced at will. For this the Burgesses pray remedy that they be treated as were their ancestors in the time of the Marshalls. The Burgesses pray that their goods be delivered to them and that those in prison be freed and those outlawed are bailed [*assauz*] during the case.<sup>9</sup>

By force of their charter the burgesses won the case eventually, although not until the early years of the fourteenth century.

Like the Brecon cases, rather than being unusual, conflict at Haverfordwest was common, although it took different forms. The burgesses of Haverfordwest possessed elements of self-government and independence as the above case indicates, and yet the town was not entirely self-governing as it was still subject to the steward of the lordship of Haverford. In March 1356, a commission which included Thomas Tebaud, the steward of Queen Isabel who held the lordship of Haverford at this point, was set up to enquire into 'all seditions, confederacies, oppressions, extortions, falsities, champerties, embraceries, forestallings, regratings, damages and excesses against the king and people of the lordship and others when it was lately in the king's hands'. Seven months later, another commission, this time including the sheriff of London, was set up following testimony of the queen to deliver fourteen named men to Tebaud to receive justice. According to the indictment, these men were 'indicted of trespasses within [the queen's] lordship of Haverford . . . and . . . have withdrawn from the lordship on that account and are now vagabonds in London and elsewhere so that they cannot be chastised in the lordship for the felonies'.<sup>10</sup> It is most probable that the majority – if not all – of these men were burgesses of the town rather than rural tenants within the wider lordship, although the burgesses often fulfilled that role too. From the chance survival of deeds recording transactions of town properties alone, five of them can be identified as 'reeves' or leading town officials ultimately subject to the power of the steward. Another served as juror to a land transaction in the same source and was therefore almost certainly a member of the town government.<sup>11</sup> So at least a substantial proportion of these fourteen men formed the burgess elite of Haverfordwest and the inference is that they were acting as a group, even perhaps a governing clique, rather than as lawless individuals committing separate illegal acts.

The list of charges in the remit of the first commission may have been, in part, a formulaic device to ensure an inquiry of broad scope, rather than an

entirely accurate description of actual case-by-case wrongdoings. The second commission speaks of trespasses and felonies that were serious enough for these men, with much to lose, to escape to London. They are charged with committing these acts against ‘the king and the people of the lordship and others’. Were they therefore oppressing those in the town and lordship with less wealth and power, or were the ‘people’ to whom the commission refers actually royal officials and the steward that the accused may have drawn swords with? The language of sedition and confederacy suggests the latter and the language of oppression, extortion and trespass suggests the former. What is certain is that this was not a racial conflict as the lordship of Haverford was one of the most anglicized in Wales at this time.

A more obscure case at Haverfordwest is recorded in the minister’s account of September 1405 to September 1406 during the immediate aftermath of the devastating attack on the town by Glyn Dŵr’s French allies. Several gentlemen were paid in two pipes of wine to come ‘to Haverford to view the state of the lordship and its ministers and to complete *a great discord between the people there* by reason of the prosecution of a certain appeal by Joan Picton . . . against Henry Wogan and others’.<sup>12</sup> Henry Wogan was a leading Pembrokeshire gentleman and later knight. Could this ‘great discord’ have been the result of conflicting views over the way the town was to renew itself following the recent devastation?

If the elements of these foregoing conflicts at Haverfordwest are relatively opaque, they are clearer in another conflict within the same town which took place less than ten years after the Picton–Wogan controversy. Our evidence is one line of royal administration composed in February 1417. It grants:

Pardon to the men and burgesses of the town of Haverford of all rebellions, insurrections, felonies and misprisions by them against Roland Leynthale, [knight], and his servants on 1, 2, and 3 May, 3 Henry V [1415].<sup>13</sup>

Roland Leynthale, a Herefordshire soldier, loyal knight of the king and brother-in-law of Thomas, earl of Arundel, became steward of the lordship of Haverford and constable of Haverfordwest castle in 1405. He was part of ‘a formidable trio of soldier-commanders’ that were to secure the county from Glyn Dŵr’s rebels. He apparently defended the castle of Haverfordwest while the French allies of Glyn Dŵr took the rest of the town in June 1405, and in 1408 accompanied the prince of Wales to help put down the Glyn Dŵr rebellion.<sup>14</sup> And yet, in spite of his apparent recent heroics for the English cause in Wales, the English townspeople of Haverfordwest opposed him in a rebellion serious enough to warrant a royal pardon. Leynthale’s position and profession meant that he was often absent in the service of the king. But he seems to have been present with his servants or retainers at the time of the Haverfordwest rebellion, which was also the time of the town’s annual fair in 1415. One possible cause of the conflict is that Leynthale was perhaps particularly

oppressive in invoking his jurisdictional supremacy over the town. That the rebellion took place at the annual fair suggests that it was planned in advance and provided the opportunity to gather the forces of the town and lordship at a time and place where they could congregate without suspicion. If this is the case then perhaps grievances were longstanding ones. Another possible scenario is that Leynthale, who took part as a leading English knight in the battle of Agincourt a little later that same year, was recruiting for the French campaign and the fair provided a useful focus for his purposes. Like many burgesses in Wales, those of Haverfordwest were probably exempt from military service outside the town for more than a day because they were charged with defending their town militarily. So any heavy-handedness on Leynthale's part in this respect would have contravened the town's liberties, besides upsetting the townspeople.<sup>15</sup>

The friction generated between William de Braose, lord of Gower and Swansea, and his largely English rural and urban tenants was sufficient to cause the intervention of the English crown in the early years of the fourteenth century. In 1306, both the tenants of 'The English County of Gower' and the burgesses of Swansea were given charters with extensive rights with which to defend their bodies and their legal and financial interests against Braose, his officers and household, after successfully appealing to the crown against alleged oppressions over at least the previous four years. By 1302, the crown seems to have been alerted to the conflict by Braose's asserted royal jurisdiction as a Marcher lord over the county of Gower, a region which the sheriff of Carmarthen claimed came under the jurisdiction of the king's southern Principality.<sup>16</sup> Then another royal commission was set up in November 1305 to go to Swansea in the following Lent,

to enquire touching divers petitions of William Brewosa's men and tenants of Guwer and Sweyneseye before the king and council of diver trespasses of the said William against them, to wit, that under colour of a charter of liberties he attracts and appropriates to himself the jurisdiction of giving judgments in courts there by a justice and sheriff whom he has newly appointed there, and does not permit judgments to be given by the suitors of those courts, as has been accustomed.<sup>17</sup>

It seems as though matters had quickly become more urgent and, in January 1306, before this commission took place, another commission of oyer and terminer was set up to be undertaken 'by jury of the land of Guwer and the town of Sweyneseye, touching the trespasses, injuries and grievances of the men and tenants of William de Brewosa at the hands of the said William, and the custom of giving judgments in the courts of those parts'.<sup>18</sup> The clauses in the Swansea charter of 1306 that was granted as a result of this commission are regarded as a summary of these grievances. They concern the abuse or disregard of the courts and judicial process, the dictatorial choice of town officials, the unjust levying of taxation and other arbitrary financial exactions,

the repayment of forced loans and the scale of exactions for the breaches of the assize of ale. In addition to the financial and governmental abuses that they were subjected to, the burgesses were fined by the lord's officers in the absence of a jury of their peers, and imprisoned while unable to defend their cases and to bring complaints against these officers in their town court. There seems to have been a total disregard of the significant franchise they had possessed since the late twelfth century.<sup>19</sup>

Less serious conflicts in at least two of the northern royal castellated boroughs arose over the allocation of landholdings for burgesses during the period of early settlement in the post-Edwardian conquest decades. Access to land was important for these alien settlers at least as a means of subsistence in hostile territory. The sixty acres promised to each burgess to attract settlers to Cricieth did not materialize. An early petition seeking redress records that six acres was the largest amount of acreage a burgess possessed and some had none at all. But the burgesses were to be disappointed, and this may have had implications for the borough's development. There were only nine burgesses in the borough in 1294, the highest recorded number being twenty-five or twenty-six in 1319. At Harlech, the lack of land was also, according to Edward Lewis, 'a burning grievance': in 1308, only five burgesses held lands outside the borough. For Harlech, the petitions to the crown were eventually successful, and by 1315 they acquired mills and lands in a nearby commote. The following year they held these lands and the borough at fee farm. The struggle was not yet over because 'during the next six years an interesting duel was waged between the town bailiffs and the local ministers of the Principality as to the exact definition of the royal lands'. It was only finally resolved in their favour in the late 1320s.<sup>20</sup>

In a later context, on 8 July 1528, Rhys ap Gruffydd, a Carmarthenshire esquire, lord of Carew in Pembrokeshire and stand-in steward and receiver of Pembroke, wrote a letter to Cardinal Wolsey concerning troubles with Irish people in Pembrokeshire, particularly in Tenby. It is worth recording in full:

20,000 Irishmen have come within these twelve months into Pembrokeshire, the lordship of Haverfordwest, and along the sea to St. David's. They are for the most part rascals out of the dominions of the rebel earl of Desmond; very few from the English pale. The town of Tenby is almost all Irish, rulers and commons, who disobey all the King's processes issuing from the exchequer of Pembroke, supposing their charter warrants them to do so. One of them, named Germyn Gruffith, is owner of two great ships, well appointed with ordnance. They will take no English or Welsh into their service. Last year, hearing of a great number of them being landed, the writer made a privy watch, and in two little parishes took above 200, and sent them to sea again. They have since returned with many more, all claiming kindred in the country, but he has ever since expelled them as before. Throughout the circuit there are four Irishmen to one English or Welsh. Order should be given that no man in these parts retain



any Irishman in his service, otherwise they will increase more and more. The mayor and town of Tenby have committed great riots, and unlawful assemblies, with divers extortions as appears by indictments against them in the records of Pembroke. They have also aided and victualled the King's enemies at different times.<sup>21</sup>

Rhys ap Gruffydd was heir to the most powerful and wealthy gentry family in west Wales in the early sixteenth century, and came into his inheritance on the death of his grandfather Sir Rhys ap Thomas three years earlier. His grandfather's position as the highest royal officer in south Wales, that is, justiciar of the counties of Carmarthen and Cardigan, was not granted to him as he might have hoped, but was instead granted to Walter Devereux, Lord Ferrers, three weeks after Sir Rhys's death in the summer of 1525. Nevertheless, Rhys ap Gruffydd commanded a large entourage of retainers in south Wales and proceeded to assert his authority there, eventually joining the long list executed for treason by Henry VIII in 1531.<sup>22</sup> Rhys's apparent expulsions of Irish people from Pembrokeshire could have been achieved with his authority as steward of Pembroke castle. And yet his assertion that 'the town of Tenby is all Irish, rulers and commons' appears false because there is little evidence of Irish names in the records for Tenby at this time.<sup>23</sup> One suspects, therefore, that the defence-of-the-realm rhetoric was deployed by the steward of the earldom of Pembroke in order to enhance his appeal to Wolsey over a jurisdictional conflict between himself and the town of Tenby, a conflict he was losing. Like nearby Haverfordwest more than two centuries earlier, there is the refusal by Tenby's burgesses to obey the authority of Pembroke. If other elements of Rhys's testimony can be trusted, this conflict was serious with – like Haverfordwest earlier – accusations of open collective rioting and rebellion apparently in connection with attempts by the lordship of Pembroke to assert its authority and jurisdiction over the town of Tenby.

Apart from the relatively minor cases at Harlech and Cricieth, all of the cases of conflict between lords and townspeople over liberties occurred in the southern seigniorial boroughs, that is, those founded and controlled by private lords rather than by the crown, although a number were in crown hands at various points. This bias may be an accident of evidence survival, but there may be other reasons which can now be discussed. Royal borough foundations in England possessed greater liberties for the purposes of selfgovernment than did the seigniorial boroughs. This distinction was stressed by the earliest historians of the medieval British borough, and it has been reiterated more recently.<sup>24</sup> Edward Lewis, with his perceptive eye for comparisons between the boroughs in England and those in Wales, commented that this was also the case in Wales, although the distinction was not so marked. Nevertheless, he shows how the royal boroughs of the northern Principality received extensive charters of liberties immediately upon their foundation in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, in contrast to 'that period of vagueness between the

foundation of the castle and the appearance of the town charter, so characteristic of the baronial boroughs'.<sup>25</sup> Borough franchises in seigniorial boroughs could not be taken for granted. In the border regions of what would become Monmouthshire and Radnorshire, charters of urban liberties seem to have been rare in such towns before the fifteenth century – if not so rare as Lewis once thought – and their level of success in this respect seems more akin to that of their English neighbours. Even when seigniorial boroughs in Wales were granted liberties providing for self-government, incremental enfranchisement was often a protracted process and drawn out over centuries.<sup>26</sup> What could be described as informal governments certainly existed in the absence of formal institutions, but the point is that in seigniorial boroughs lords were less generous than the crown in relinquishing controls to their burgesses. At the same time this control was highly prized by burgesses, hence the endemic source of conflict.

Attention should be drawn to the cluster of cases of social conflict in the late thirteenth century and the first half of the fourteenth century. This was, of course, the period of consolidation following the Edwardian conquest, and one in which the conditions granted to new towns in the north upon foundation had to be negotiated. The outcomes of the negotiations would set the tone of relationships in the years that followed. With the dangerous threat of the powerful Welsh princes gone, perhaps a mood of renegotiation coloured the strategies of a Valence or a Braose in the south towards their enfranchised urban tenants, or towards those whom they wished to draw into their jurisdictions. Perhaps in the eyes of such lords the conditions of conquest, which gave burgesses leverage in their demands for franchises in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, were becoming less apparent, and so the maintenance of franchises granted during those conditions could be challenged. This period was a profitable one for English lords on both their Welsh and their English estates, given that it was one of high population which generated a high demand for burgages and a high level of other aspects of lordship revenue. Indeed, due to the perceived increase in stability following the Edwardian conquest, there was an increased flow of population into the towns in Wales, while it had peaked in England.<sup>27</sup> The increases in revenue such demand delivered in terms of rents and in jurisdictional profits was something the increasingly confident lords would wish channelled into their pockets rather than into those of their burgesses.

### *Conflicts within urban communities*

Much of the conflict in towns in England was a symptom and a cause of the polarization of wealth and political power within the towns themselves between the fourteenth and early sixteenth centuries, particularly the narrowing of government representation into an oligarchy or ruling clique.<sup>28</sup> The lack of surviving administrative records for the towns in Wales, such as court rolls, assembly books which detail elections, ordinances and issues of

concern at the time and chamberlains' account books which reveal examples of conflict in records of payments for legal cases, seriously hinders our knowledge of this theme in Wales. Some cases have come to light. As indicated above, it could be argued that the serious conflicts in Haverfordwest around 1356 were the consequence of elite elements oppressing the lesser commons, and the 'great discord' in 1405–6 could also be interpreted in this way. A clearer case of class conflict appears in Newport in 1530. In a petition to the chancellor, Thomas More, it was claimed that the mayor and burgesses of the town were abusing their power to impose a new custom illegitimately upon the non-burgesses.<sup>29</sup> Apart from these examples, we are left in the dark without further detailed documentary research. It is noteworthy that when town assembly books do appear in the sixteenth century, in Swansea for example, we do find evidence of conflict. The first surviving assembly book at Swansea begins in 1547 but sections of it are jumbled, making dating sometimes difficult. But certainly in the 1550s or early 1560s, Swansea's central government of port reeve and twelve aldermen felt it necessary to lay out fines and other punishments for any of the 'comynge' (burgesses and non-burgess commoners outside of the oligarchy) who 'myseuse the porttryffe yn wordes as to call hym knave, horssen, churlee or eny other vnsettylyng wordes' or 'vyonlently ley hand or stroke the porteryffe'.<sup>30</sup> The same applied if any of the twelve aldermen received the same treatment, unless one of the aldermen struck first. The decision to write down an ordinance of this sort provides a window onto the history of recent events in the town. Similar terms of abuse were exchanged between the journeymen and masters of the Shoemakers' guild in Haverfordwest. These were recorded in the company's order book in the 1570s and 1580s. Masters were described as 'codgers' and 'knave' in front of the assembly of masters in the company hall. In one case, in 1585, a certain John Phillips came before the masters and wardens of the occupation in the hall and the clerk recording the proceedings wrote that Phillips 'sayd torde [turd] in the masters detys [debts] andd in Thomas Hendyes deths and sayd that he ys as good as anye of the companye of the ocabastion [occupation] and thes ys ys [his] wordes'.<sup>31</sup> Admittedly these cases are rather late, and yet they are perhaps indicative of tensions within Welsh towns and guilds in the previous (fifteenth) century. In Haverfordwest, for example, the masters of the Shoemakers' guild petitioned the town government in 1499 to regulate the conditions of service of their journeymen and apprentices, no doubt to the detriment of the latter two groups. Similarly, in Cardiff, the shoemakers and glovers had already formed associations by 1323, and in 1482 each craft had its own assembly hall and chartered controls on journeymen and apprentices.<sup>32</sup> While not apparently serious, these cases do reveal underlying sources of conflict, and because they target authority they go beyond everyday violence and criminality.

While records of urban corporate administration are lacking for medieval Wales, evidence from charters, especially, but also from rentals, surveys and

taxation records, can be examined for tendencies towards oligarchy and social polarization. Conclusions can then be drawn regarding the *potential* sources of conflict within Welsh towns.

The guild merchant is often seen as an urban institution which, on the face of it, provided commercial privileges to all of the free burgess population, but in practice formed a sectional interest in the government of medieval British towns. It promoted the interests of the mercantile elite as opposed to those of the artisans or handicrafts and the non-burgess population.<sup>33</sup> These merchant guilds were relatively common in Welsh towns. A Merchants' guild for Pembrokeshire, based in the town of Pembroke, was granted to all merchants of that county in a charter datable to between 1154 and 1189. Haverfordwest was granted its own independent charter in the 1220s. The other larger towns of southern Wales, such as Brecon and Cardiff, were granted them by the first half of the fourteenth century, and those of the northern March, such as Denbigh and Oswestry, by the end of the fourteenth century. Many of the smaller boroughs in Wales that contained fewer than a thousand people, such as Cardigan, Aberystwyth and most of the lesser Glamorgan boroughs, were also granted them by the end of the fourteenth century. All of the nine boroughs of the northern Principality were granted them upon foundation in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.<sup>34</sup> Welshpool is notable for having gained this privilege from its Welsh founder in 1286.<sup>35</sup>

The ability of towns to hold rents and other urban jurisdictional income by fee-farm enabled a greater level of self-governing responsibility and corporate focus. The fee-farm was a much-prized liberty because it removed further levels of lordship interference and enabled profits on revenue to accrue to the town rather than to the lord. It was also conducive to government administration by the elite. This privilege was less common, although Brecon, Carmarthen and Denbigh obtained it in the first half of the fourteenth century; as we have seen, Brecon, at least, had it frequently confiscated. Fee farms were common for the northern Principality boroughs, although only Conwy out of the three relatively substantial towns – the others being Beaumaris and Caernarfon – had that privilege. The strategic importance of the latter undoubtedly coloured the crown's decision to maintain controls. Caernarfon petitioned for the privilege in 1328 but was left disappointed.<sup>36</sup>

Marcher lords and the crown were less enthusiastic about allowing burgesses to elect their own mayors or chief magistrates before the sixteenth century, thereby withdrawing the authority of the steward and, in the case of the royal northern boroughs, the constable-mayor. Nevertheless, this important step was achieved quite early in some towns: Carmarthen in 1386, Cardigan in 1395, Tenby in 1402 and Oswestry in 1407. Haverfordwest achieved it later in 1479 and Pembroke in 1485. The characteristic process leading towards oligarchy can be identified in such grants. In Haverfordwest, a permanent common council of twenty-four men was formed, all nominated by the mayor. In

Pembroke, the council under the mayor contained a small inner circle of twelve. Even where the steward or constable maintained ultimate authority, oligarchies formed. In Cardiff, a permanent council of twelve aldermen was formed as early as 1421 from 'the more discreet and fit' burgesses. It was a self-perpetuating oligarchy with vacancies filled by nominees of the twelve. Moreover, 'the trend towards bourgeois oligarchy was encouraged when Richard, duke of Gloucester, urged the choice of more considerable, more powerful, more worthy and better persons as bailiffs of Cardiff in 1477'. Cowbridge followed Cardiff's example of 1421 in 1460. By 1504, Abergavenny was governed by a bailiff and a recorder, ten 'capital' and fifteen 'inferior' burgesses.<sup>37</sup>

So these formal oligarchic institutions began to develop in Welsh towns after the Black Death, and this independent power was attractive to wealthy merchants and increasingly gentry during the fifteenth and into the sixteenth centuries. However, in contrast to towns in England of comparative size, marked social polarization and the domination of town governments by merchants and substantial property owners in a number of the larger towns and even some of the smaller ones was apparent by the early fourteenth century. By this time, there were shipowning merchants in towns such as Carmarthen in the south and in the smaller northern royal boroughs of Beaumaris and Caernarfon. At Carmarthen, even before the end of the thirteenth century, 'the commercial community had become the towns' most important section, providing a substantial number of reeves, bailiffs and later on mayors'. Merchants and landowners dominated the office of bailiff in the other relatively substantial northern borough of Conwy, and merchants dominated the chief office of reeve in Haverfordwest. In Cardigan, by 1302, there was a group of major property owners in the town, and these have been described as 'a small corps of grandees who lorded it over ordinary burgesses', including one major family 'in a class of their own'. In Denbighshire at the same time, 'Ruthin's society was strongly influenced by a small oligarchy of prominent men'. In Denbigh, the survey of 1334 reveals that one prominent family in this town, which had been founded in its English form only fifty years earlier, held 464 acres and another held 601 acres. Later on, in mid-fifteenth-century Aberystwyth where Welshmen had long dominated the affairs of the town, 'a small group of urban patricians . . . emerged, monopolising borough office and engaging in cutthroat rivalry that occasionally burgeoned into open violence and even murder'.<sup>38</sup> Congruent with this evidence of social polarization is evidence of clear spatial separation in Welsh towns between the politically and commercially dominant burgesses and the rest of the town. At Cardiff by the sixteenth century, eight of the twelve aldermen of the town lived in the High Street. At Oswestry, the continuity of spatial separation of what has been described as the 'upper crust' of that town can be identified between the fourteenth and the sixteenth centuries.<sup>39</sup>

This wealth and power in both royal and seigniorial borough government was bolstered by opportunities for office-holding in the Marcher and Principality administrations in Welsh towns, and these opportunities would have attracted well-heeled burgesses from early on. This was clearly the case in towns such as Carmarthen and Denbigh, where burgesses occupied posts at all levels of the hierarchy.<sup>40</sup> Clearly, a source of mutuality between lords and the elite of Welsh towns can be identified in this evidence of lordship office-holding, and this point is supported by the evidence of the lord's encouragement of oligarchy in Cardiff. But, to return to Rees Davies's point, this is not the same as saying all burgesses or all of the English in towns in Wales by and large shared mutual interests with English lords, far from it. Cosy relations between lords and a core of wealthy burgesses could serve to alienate the rest of the urban population, and town government could become more remote and corrupt as a result.

These social divisions may have militated against any forces for communal cohesiveness, and particularly from the late fourteenth century when the factor of race became less and less relevant. Some historians may argue that the increasing elitism of urban government representation in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was a function of the personal expense of holding office in a period of recession and its time-consuming nature. As such, it received consent from the broader population of commoners and non-burgesses. Others would argue that such social division between townspeople was not conducive to consistently shared identities and interests and so rendered the social environment unstable, particularly if commoners felt themselves to be deliberately marginalized.

### *Conclusion*

This brief survey reveals social conflict to be a more significant factor in medieval Welsh towns than is often thought. In medieval Wales, lords and burgesses had points of shared interest but also points of serious contention which sometimes generated bitter legal disputes and sometimes flared into open rebellion. There is also substantial evidence of acute social polarization within the towns from early on, between townspeople of the same culture or race, and of the widening of this polarization after the Black Death. The implications of these conflicts and social divisions should be considered within the *ensemble* of social and ethnic identities and relationships at any given time in medieval Wales, none of which were mutually exclusive.

### *Notes*

<sup>1</sup>For a study which places emphasis on the racial character of urban conflict in medieval Wales, see R. R. Davies, *Lordship and Society in the March of Wales, 1282–1400* (Oxford, 1978), especially chapters fourteen and fifteen. For an analysis which highlights racial diversity in the towns and draws attention to non-racial urban identities and privileges, see R. A. Griffiths, 'Wales and the

Marches', in D. M. Palliser (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, Volume I, 600–1540* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 704–9.

<sup>2</sup>R. H. Hilton, *English and French Towns in Feudal Society: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 127–51; J. Whittle and S. H. Rigby, 'England: popular politics and social conflict', in S. H. Rigby (ed.), *A Companion to Britain in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 78–83. For a breathtaking survey of social conflict on the Continent, see S. K. Cohn Jr, *Lust for Liberty: The Politics of Social Revolt in Medieval Europe, 1200–1425* (Cambridge, MA and London, 2006). Approximately 90 per cent of Cohn's sample of over 1,000 conflicts involved towns.

<sup>3</sup>For lordship in medieval Wales see Davies, *Lordship and Society*, and Davies, *The Age of Conquest: Wales 1063–1415* (Oxford, 2000, first published 1987). For limited social differentiation in English small towns, see Hilton, *English and French Towns*, p. 56; R. Britnell, 'Town life', in R. Horrox and W. M. Ormrod (eds), *A Social History of England, 1200–1500* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 158–60. For social differentiation in Welsh towns, see below.

<sup>4</sup>Davies, *Lordship and Society*, pp. 321–2. This analysis has influenced an important recent survey: see S. H. Rigby and Elizabeth Ewan, 'Government, power and authority', in Palliser (ed.), *Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, p. 298. Davies also seems to wish to apply his perspective of English identity in urban Wales to English serfs in rural Wales whom he suggests 'accepted the obligations of customary tenure' that is, serfdom (Davies, *Lordship and Society*, p. 383). It would be deeply controversial for anyone to argue that English serfs accepted their condition in England.

<sup>5</sup>Davies, *Lordship and Society*, pp. 91–2.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 95–6.

<sup>8</sup>R. R. Davies, 'Brecon', in R. A. Griffiths (ed.), *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales* (Cardiff, 1978), pp. 53–4.

<sup>9</sup>W. Rees (ed.), *Calendar of Ancient Petitions Relating to Wales* (Cardiff, 1975), p. 88, p. 366.

<sup>10</sup>*Calendar of Patent Rolls* (1354–1358), pp. 395–6, 493–4.

<sup>11</sup>Haverfordwest Record Office, compiled in B. G. Charles (ed.), *A Schedule of Haverfordwest Records* (National Library of Wales, 1960).

<sup>12</sup>E. A. Lewis, 'A contribution to the commercial history of medieval Wales', *Y Cymmrodor*, 24 (1913), p. 159, italics added.

<sup>13</sup>*Calendar of Patent Rolls* (1416–1422), p. 62

<sup>14</sup>R. K. Turvey, 'Unrest and rebellion, 1389–1415', in R. F. Walker (ed.), *Pembrokeshire County History, Volume II: Medieval Pembrokeshire* (Haverfordwest, 2002), pp. 210–11, 214; R. A. Griffiths, 'The extension of royal power, 1415–1536', in Walker (ed.), *Pembrokeshire County History, Vol. II*, pp. 228–9.



<sup>15</sup>Royal ministers of the northern Principality of Wales attempted to force Newborough's (largely Welsh) burgesses into Edward III's Welsh detachments in one of his Scottish wars, but their charter ensured their successful resistance: see E. A. Lewis, *The Mediaeval Boroughs of Snowdonia* (London, 1912), p. 72.

<sup>16</sup>J. Beverley Smith and T. B. Pugh, 'The lordship of Gower and Kilvey in the Middle Ages', in T. B. Pugh (ed.), *Glamorgan County History, Volume III: The Middle Ages* (Cardiff, 1971), pp. 231–40.

<sup>17</sup>*Calendar of Patent Rolls* (1301–1307), pp. 90–1, 407.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 472.

<sup>19</sup>W. R. B. Robinson, 'Medieval Swansea', in Pugh (ed.), *Glamorgan County History, Vol. III*, pp. 366–7.

<sup>20</sup>Lewis, *Mediaeval Boroughs of Snowdonia*, pp. 48–9, 53–5.

<sup>21</sup>J. Gairdner (ed.), *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII* (London, 1862–1932), vol. 4, part 2, 1526–8.

<sup>22</sup>R. A. Griffiths, *Sir Rhys ap Thomas and his Family: A Study in the Wars of the Roses and Early Tudor Politics* (Cardiff, 1993), pp. 88–111; Griffiths, 'The extension of royal power, 1415–1536', in Walker (ed.), *Pembrokeshire County History, Vol. II*, p. 258.

<sup>23</sup>See, for example, the lay subsidy of 1543 recorded in H. Owen (ed.), *A Calendar of the Public Records Relating to Pembrokeshire, Vol. III: The Earldom of Pembroke and its Members* (London, 1918), pp. 239–44.

<sup>24</sup>A. S. Green, *Townlife in the Fifteenth Century*, 2 vols (London/New York, 1894), especially vol. 1, chapters 7 and 8; C. Dyer, 'Small towns 1270–1540', in Palliser (ed.), *Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, p. 527; Rigby and Ewan, 'Government, power and authority', in Palliser (ed.), *Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, pp. 292–4.

<sup>25</sup>Lewis, *Mediaeval Boroughs of Snowdonia*, p. 38.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 1–21.

<sup>27</sup>R. Holt, 'Society and population, 600–1300', in Palliser (ed.), *Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, p. 100.

<sup>28</sup>See note 2.

<sup>29</sup>A. C. Reeves, 'Newport', in Griffiths (ed.), *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales*, p. 210.

<sup>30</sup>West Glamorgan Record Office (Swansea), B/S Corp/B1, fols 59–63.

<sup>31</sup>Glamorgan Record Office (Cardiff), CL/MS 4.59, fols 9–18 (for Philips, see fol. 16v).

<sup>32</sup>Glamorgan Record Office (Cardiff), CL/Deeds 1/3707; R. A. Griffiths, *Conquerors and Conquered in Medieval Wales* (New York, 1994), p. 348. Admittedly, it is unlikely that such craft organizations would have formed in the vast majority of Welsh towns, especially those with fewer than a thousand

inhabitants where townspeople probably experienced fewer controls from town governments and more from their lords and would have undertaken more than one occupation.

<sup>33</sup>Hilton, *English and French Towns*, pp. 71–8; Holt, ‘Society and population’, in Palliser (ed.), *Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, pp. 87–92.

<sup>34</sup>For Pembrokeshire and Haverfordwest, see P. G. Sudbury, ‘The medieval boroughs of Pembrokeshire’ (unpublished MA thesis, University of Wales, 1947), p. 40; and S. Dimmock, ‘Haverfordwest: an exemplar for the study of southern Welsh towns in the later Middle Ages’, in *Welsh History Review*, 22, 1 (2004), p. 11; Griffiths (ed.), *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales*, pp. 52–5 (Brecon); pp. 125–6 (Cardiff); p. 172 (Denbigh); pp. 241–2 (Oswestry); Griffiths, *Conquerors and Conquered*, p. 293 (Cardigan); p. 309 (Aberystwyth); p. 350 (Llantrisant, Kenfig, and Neath); Lewis, *Mediaeval Boroughs of Snowdonia*, p. 39.

<sup>35</sup>C. Gross, *The Gild Merchant*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1890), vol. 2, p. 389. See also for a number of printed Welsh town charters.

<sup>36</sup>For Brecon, see note 2; Griffiths, *Conquerors and Conquered*, pp. 58–9 (Carmarthen); D. H. Owen, ‘Denbigh’, in Griffiths (ed.), *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales*, p. 177; Lewis, *Mediaeval Boroughs of Snowdonia*, pp. 73–4.

<sup>37</sup>Griffiths, *Conquerors and Conquered*, p. 158 (Carmarthen); p. 292 (Cardigan); p. 348 (Cardiff); p. 356 (Cowbridge); D. F. Walker, ‘Tenby’, in Griffiths (ed.), *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales*, p. 307; L. B. Smith, ‘Oswestry’, *ibid.*, p. 234; T. Hopkins, ‘The towns’, in R. A. Griffiths, A. Hopkins and R. Howell (eds), *Gwent County History, Volume II: The Age of the Marcher Lords, c. 1070–1536* (Cardiff, 2008), pp. 131–2 (Abergavenny).

<sup>38</sup>Owen, ‘Denbigh’, p. 175; Dimmock, ‘Haverfordwest: an exemplar for the study of southern Welsh towns’, p. 23; M. Stevens, ‘Wealth, status and “race” in the Ruthin of Edward II’, *Urban History*, 32, 1 (2005), pp. 29–31; Griffiths, *Conquerors and Conquered*, pp. 179, 181, 182 (Carmarthen); p. 288 (Cardigan); p. 315 (Aberystwyth). Elements of elite rivalry and serious factional conflict can also be seen at Newport in the early 1530s where there were violent disturbances during what has been described as ‘the struggle for supremacy between the Morgan and Herbert families’. Women of the town attempted to restore order in what seems to have been a peace protest. They processed around the town with a banner belonging to the parish church bearing the image of St Woolos: see A. C. Reeves, ‘Newport’, in Griffiths (ed.), *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales*, pp. 210–11. Because these conflicts at Newport and Aberystwyth appear to have been between those of equal wealth and political power I have not included them in this survey. Such factional conflicts, however, were often the result of complicated political alignments in which class interests formed a key element. See, for example, C. Dyer, ‘Small town conflict in the later Middle Ages: events at Shipston-on-Stour’, *Urban History*, 19 (1992), 183–210.

<sup>39</sup>Griffiths, *Conquerors and Conquered*, pp. 349–50; M. Griffiths, ‘Very wealthy by merchandise’, in J. Gwynfor Jones (ed.), *Class, Community and Culture in Tudor Wales* (Cardiff, 1989), pp. 208–9; Smith, ‘Oswestry’, pp. 227–8.

<sup>40</sup>Owen, ‘Denbigh’, p. 178; Griffiths, *Conquerors and Conquered*, p. 184.

# Anglo-Welsh Towns of the Early Fourteenth Century: A Survey of Urban Origins, Property-Holding and Ethnicity

**Matthew Frank Stevens**

It is very difficult to identify a uniform urban culture in late thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century Wales, given the great diversity of social environments which existed in the many small towns that dotted the Welsh landscape. The towns of Wales contained a multitude of men and women, Welsh and English, there to trade, to work and to live. But not all of these persons interacted within the urban space on equal social and economic terms. In particular, those persons who enjoyed burgess status, normally attained through borough property ownership, could, in most towns, buy and sell goods, and travel into and out of the community free from tolls, which non-burgesses were liable to pay. Further, burgesses often enjoyed privileges such as low fixed rents, a degree of self-government, the free devise of their property and the right to have their quarrels resolved in their own borough court or courts.<sup>1</sup> Each town's package of privileges created among its burgesses a unique society enjoying economic advantages over local nonburgesses, who not only were subject to town and market tolls, but, in most parts of Wales, were banned from trading outside of their local borough market.<sup>2</sup> While non-burgesses might live and work within a borough, without holding burgage property they could not participate in all aspects of borough society.<sup>3</sup>

For this reason, borough property-holding was the key to accessing urban prosperity. But additionally, in Wales, ethnicity played a central role in determining whether or not an individual could readily enter into borough property, and thereby become a burgess. By around the year 1300, the age of conquest and town creation in Wales was generally at an end, and virtually all towns in Wales contained at least some Welsh burgesses. However, in each town the proportion of burgesses who were Welsh varied widely, depending to a greater or lesser extent on the circumstances of each town's origin and early development. An era of 'winnowing' followed the main period of urban foundation in the late thirteenth century, gaining pace towards the mid-fourteenth century, as some towns proved economically viable and others unviable, a process that re-sensitized competing Welsh and English burgesses to issues of ethnicity.<sup>4</sup> But the beginning of the fourteenth century was, for most towns, a period of relative peace and stability representing the peak of medieval Welsh urbanization.

This chapter contains a general discussion of what a traveller in early fourteenth-century Wales might have expected to encounter in the country's many small towns, of different origins, in terms of property-holding and ethnicity. It is based primarily on data collected from taxpayer and tenant lists, drawn up between 1292 and 1326, for 42 of Wales's 100 or so contemporary towns, recording the names of 2,290 urban tenants or taxpayers (see [Table 6.2](#)). Twenty of these lists are taxpayer lists compiled in connection with the collection of a lay subsidy of one-fifteenth levied on moveable goods, imposed on Wales by Edward I in 1292–3. These lists contain the names, sometimes with title or occupation, of all persons from each town who contributed to the fifteenth, and for what payment each person was assessed. Keeping in mind that the poor, with few or no moveable goods, were exempt from the subsidy, these taxpayer lists offer insights into contemporary hierarchies of moveable wealth among town dwellers, of modest to exceptional prosperity, which can be contextualized by the ethnicity and occupations of the taxpayers.

The other twenty-two documents from which data have been extracted are tenant lists compiled as borough rentals and extents. Most of these documents detail the names of all borough property-holders, sometimes with title or occupation, how much burgage property (and often how much extraburghal property) each burgess held and the annual rents and obligations connected with that property. Like taxpayer lists, these documents do not regularly name the poorest of town-dwellers, who often did not themselves own property but were the subtenants of more prosperous burgesses. They do allow, however, the reconstruction of urban hierarchies of property-based wealth among town-dwellers, which, like hierarchies of moveable wealth discernible from taxpayer lists, are extremely informative when contextualized by the ethnicity and occupations of burgesses. Where multiple tenant lists exist for a town, data drawn from the document dateable most closely to the year 1300 have been relied upon for comparison with other towns in general discussion. Taken together, tenant and taxpayer lists are an underused resource for the study of Welsh towns, as the following discussion, based primarily on the data of ethnicity contained within them, demonstrates.

### *Urban origins and ethnic integration*

Excepting a small number of settlements with pre-Norman roots, Wales was urbanized overwhelmingly during the 230-year period from c.1070 to c.1300 as the collective result of piecemeal (private) and wholesale (royal) initiatives by Norman, English and occasionally Welsh lords to conquer the landscape militarily and reorganize it economically.<sup>5</sup> Military advances and changes of political control were entrenched through the construction of fortifications, initially in timber and later in stone. Economic reorganization was embodied by the creation of new market towns as central points of exchange where regional trade could be monetized, regulated and taxed for the profit of the lord, changes which were often entrenched by local regulations prohibiting trade

outside of designated town markets.<sup>6</sup> Military conquest, including castle construction, and economic reorganization often went hand in hand. Edward I's carefully laid out castled boroughs in north Wales, including Conwy, Caernarfon and Harlech, exemplify a conscious programme of conquest fortification and economic reorganization.<sup>7</sup> However, economic reorganization also took place in the absence of conquest, wherever landlords – English or Welsh, secular or ecclesiastical – felt it advantageous to promote the centralization and growth of trade through urban plantation on 'green-field' sites or the extension of urban liberties to pre-existing 'organic' communities. Urban settlements such as the pre-conquest Welsh princes' towns of Nefyn and Pwllheli in north Wales, and the Bishop of St Davids' green-field and organic boroughs of Abergwili and St Davids, respectively, in south Wales, exemplify towns where urban development was fostered for predominantly economic reasons.<sup>8</sup>

Further, towns of Norman or English military origin – that is to say, those where market communities were developed around fortified outposts – can generally be classified as falling into one of three basic groups: those where the fortification and town were constructed on either a green-field site or a site from which all pre-existing settlement was systematically cleared away (for example, Kidwelly and Caernarfon, respectively);<sup>9</sup> those where the fortification and town were built in close proximity to a pre-existing settlement of urban or proto-urban character (for example, the close proximity of New Carmarthen to Old Carmarthen, and Conwy to Degannwy);<sup>10</sup> and those where an existing settlement near a fortification was retained as a core community onto which an English borough was superimposed as urban privileges were granted and non-native townsmen were invited to immigrate (for example, Ruthin or Cilgerran).<sup>11</sup>

Naturally, not all of the hundred or so towns which existed in early fourteenth-century Wales fit neatly into the categories laid out here, but as a conceptual framework within which to understand urban origins in Wales these categories are extremely useful, particularly in understanding the degree of urban ethnic integration which had taken place by the turn of the fourteenth century. For a traveller in Wales, c.1300, the origins of the towns he might pass through would have determined not only their built environment – virtually all towns of mixed military-economic origins having visible fortifications which towns of predominantly economic origin typically lacked – but also the urban cultures he might expect to encounter in them.

As is evident from [Table 6.1](#), the typical proportions of tenants or taxpayers in towns, c.1300, who were Welsh or English, varied between and within town-origin groups. Intra-group variance existed largely because, in addition to origin alone, both the number of years over which a community had been potentially open to ethnic integration by c.1300, and each town's proximity to England or a significant English settlement, strongly influenced the relative size

of its Welsh and English populations. Overall, however, towns of predominantly economic origin typically contained the highest proportions of Welsh tenants or taxpayers. These are towns in which the Welsh language would have been very commonly heard in the streets and used to transact business, and in which the parish churches were most often dedicated to Welsh saints.<sup>12</sup>

A. Towns of economic origin

Some towns of predominantly economic origin were located in areas too isolated from the Anglo-Welsh territorial struggles of the eleventh to thirteenth centuries to have experienced frontline conflict, non-native lordship or English immigration. This explains the thoroughly Welsh character of towns such as the Caernarfonshire settlements of Nefyn and Pwllheli, or the Merionethshire and Montgomeryshire settlements of Dolgellau and Machynlleth. However, the same cannot be said of more easterly settlements such as Caerwys and Wrexham, in Flintshire and Denbighshire, both of which were often on the fringes of Welsh and English territorial control and yet were strongly Welsh in character. This is as clear an indication as may be found that Welsh society was not intrinsically hostile to urban life, given economically favourable conditions for urban growth.

Table 6.1 Welsh towns: urban origins and ethnic integration, c.1300

Economic Origins			Military-Economic Origins								
			Green-Field / Clearance			Parallel			Superimposed		
	Years since foundation*	Welsh tenants, as a per cent		Years since foundation*	Welsh tenants, as a per cent		Years since foundation*	Welsh tenants, as a per cent		Years since foundation*	Welsh tenants, as a per cent
Llandeilo	113	100	Cardigan	52	20	Carmarthen, New	46	11	†Dinefwr, Old	140	94
Welshpool	52	24	††Diserth	45	100	Aberystwyth	25	53	†Knighton	93	54
Caerwys	51	91	New Moat	35	4	Conwy	13	8	Gilgerran	89	77
Llangadog	45	97	†Presteigne	31	6	†Dinefwr, New	5	48	†Degannwy	54	10
Llawhaden	45	21	Holt	30	4				Ruthin	40	50
St Davids	45	38	Denbigh	20	3				†Overton	14	41
Abergwili	39	35	Flint	16	7				Llanidloes	13	62
Wrexham	33	78	Rhuddlan	16	1				†Mostyn	11	15
Adpar	29	80	Caernarfon	14	0						
†Abergele	27	23	Baumaris	10	8						
Hope	16	0	Castell y Bere	9	50						
Trefnant	14	100	Harlech	9	42						
Tywyn	10	100									
Dolgellau	9	100									
Nefyn	9	99									
Pwllheli	9	100									
Lampeter	8	90									
Machynlleth	2	100									

Source: Table 6.2 below; Soulsby, *The Towns of Medieval Wales*.

\* This is the number of years prior to the making of the tenant or taxpayer list used, as per Table 6.2, from which borough life was actively fostered (for example, a charter or grant of market) or ethnic integration might reasonably have begun (for example, since a known expulsion of one ethnic group).

† Towns for which origin-classification evidence is particularly Spartan.

†† Town abandoned to Welsh occupation after the castle’s destruction in 1263. Soulsby, *The Towns of Medieval Wales*, p. 130.

Towns of predominantly economic origin, in which a minority of the population was Welsh, were generally those to which English immigration was



encouraged, those near to significant English population centres or those to which both of these criteria apply. Welsh burgesses were welcome and established in these towns, but English immigration was also welcomed or encouraged as an economic stimulus. The borough of Welshpool, for example, was a Welsh community formalized by the lord of Powys, Gruffydd ap Gwenwynwyn, as early as 1241, in 'a deliberate attempt . . . to emulate the more prosperous boroughs like Hereford across the border'.<sup>13</sup> Gruffydd extended to his burgesses the generous Norman urban liberties of Breteuil, as applied in Hereford and spread throughout Wales and Ireland by Anglo-Norman conquerors, as a tool to promote urban growth by attracting English immigration.<sup>14</sup> The town remained very much Welsh-governed, Gruffydd's son Owen acting as 'bailiff' of the borough in 1282, but a lay subsidy of 1292–1293 indicates that English immigration by that time had been substantial enough to reduce the proportion of taxpayers who were Welsh to just 24 per cent.<sup>15</sup> Bishop Bek of St Davids (1280–93), lord of the episcopal towns of Abergwili, Adpar, Llandeilo, Llangadog, Llawhaden, New Moat (a town of pre-episcopal military-economic origins) and St Davids, also formalized the urban privileges of towns of predominantly economic origin and, in some instances, seems to have encouraged English immigration as an urban economic stimulus. In 1281, Bishop Bek granted St Davids twice-weekly markets and two yearly fairs, and by the time of an episcopal extent of 1326 only 34 per cent of burgesses were Welsh.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, in 1281, Bishop Bek granted a weekly market and two annual fairs to the town of Llawhaden, where he would construct a new bishop's palace, and by the time of the 1326 extent only 21 per cent of burgesses were Welsh.<sup>17</sup> Given the distance of these Pembrokeshire towns from either England or significant English settlements, encouraged or organized English immigration designed to stimulate urban growth is a highly probable explanation for their minority Welsh/ majority English populations. A similar situation may have prevailed in the Carmarthenshire town of Abergwili, where urban life was seemingly encouraged by Bishop Bek during the construction of a collegiate church; but here the influence of the nearby major English settlement of New Carmarthen can be clearly identified as a source of English burgesses.<sup>18</sup>

Lastly, among towns of predominantly economic origin in Table 6.1, is the Flintshire borough of Hope, whose unique history is noteworthy. The native roots of this town are clear from the arrangement of its streets, radiating out from a parish church dedicated to St Cynfarch.<sup>19</sup> However, something of a *coup d'état* was under way in Hope by the end of the thirteenth century, with none of the town's named taxpayers of 1292–3 having indisputably Welsh names (although some, such as 'Dd fabre' – indicating either Dafydd or David *faber*, 'skilled worker' – or residents exempt from the tax due to poverty, may well have been Welsh).<sup>20</sup> Further, a borough charter granted to Hope in 1351, following a petition of the English townsfolk to Edward III, specifically

excluded Welsh burgesses, whose burgages were confiscated and redistributed.<sup>21</sup>

On the whole, a culture of tolerance must normally have prevailed in Welsh towns of economic origin where English burgesses had come to comprise the majority of townsmen. At least at first, English immigrants would have had to integrate individually or in small groups, upon arrival, with established Welsh urban social systems and hierarchies. Nevertheless, as exemplified by the borough of Hope, ethnic relations were fluid. It is likely that the drastic change from native settlement to exclusively English borough which took place in Hope, formalized in the town's 1351 charter, was the result of a critical mass of English burgesses working together to monopolize the sharply reduced volume of trade the borough must have seen following the depopulation of the surrounding countryside by the Black Death of 1348–1349.<sup>22</sup> It is also likely that Hope's English burgesses would have been more reluctant to take such divisive action if the town's location had been in west Wales, as opposed to only six miles south-west of Chester. Nevertheless, as suggested by events at Hope, in towns near to the English border or close to prominent English settlements such as Chester or New Carmarthen, early fourteenth-century Welsh townsmen in communities that were in their majority English would have had cause to be acutely conscious of any developments suggestive of the wholesale anglicization of their boroughs.

#### *B. Towns of military-economic origin*

What a traveller might have expected to encounter in towns of mixed military-economic origin would have been quite distinct from towns of predominantly economic origin. First, whereas towns of predominantly economic origin tended to be unwallled and open to the countryside with organic street plans, often focused on a parish church (for example, Hope or Llandeilo),<sup>23</sup> towns of military-economic origin tended to be enclosed within a ditch or wall with more grid-like street plans and focused on a castle or other fortification. In addition to the role of borough defences in stimulating a notional separation of intra-mural townsmen from extra-mural non-townsmen, defences also physically separated townsmen from common pasture and the arable land they held in conjunction with their borough property. Where castles with adjoining towns were located so as to take advantage of naturally defensible topographical features, this physical separation was exacerbated. For example, at Aberystwyth, the seaside castle-borough was separated from pasture and arable land by an extensive marsh on its landward side.<sup>24</sup> Meanwhile, at Denbigh and Harlech the castles and their boroughs were located high above the surrounding landscape, making the practicalities of life difficult. The rigours of hilltop life led the burgesses of Harlech, where geography alone was felt sufficient defence to forgo town walls, to describe their borough as 'situated on a rock, whence no material advantage occurred' in a petition of 1328 to Edward III, and led the fifteenth-century burgesses of

Denbigh to relocate progressively outside of their town walls and to lower ground.<sup>25</sup> The culture of urban life in these towns must have differed greatly from that which prevailed in towns of primarily economic origin located predominantly in lowland areas where the burgesses could move unimpeded from burgrave to pasture or field.

The separation of town and townsmen from the countryside and nontownsmen was most extreme where towns of military-economic origin were founded on green-field sites, or sites from which all previous occupation was cleared away prior to new construction. Many of these boroughs, particularly those constructed in north Wales following Edward I's 1277 and 1282 campaigns against prince Llywelyn ap Gruffydd, initially employed a conscious policy of excluding Welsh burgesses.<sup>26</sup> Generally speaking, this did not long prevent Welsh persons from buying burgrave property in these towns, as within fifteen to thirty years of their foundation virtually all of the postconquest north Wales boroughs contained at least small numbers of Welsh burgesses (Table 6.1).

The sole exception to this tacit acceptance of Welsh burgesses among green-field or cleared-site towns of military-economic origin with surviving tenant or taxpayer lists, c.1300, was the borough of Caernarfon, where, as indicated by a tenant list of 1298, burgrave ownership was still an exclusively English preserve.<sup>27</sup> This may well have been due to the special significance attached to the royal borough, founded in 1284, where Edward I brought his queen to give birth to their son 'Edward of Carnarfon', the future king Edward II. Caernarfon's long history stretched back to the nearby Roman fortress of Segontium, and by the later thirteenth century a small native Welsh settlement had developed there. Wishing to capitalize on the site's local significance, Edward I had the existing Welsh settlement demolished and cleared away before building there a castle 'deliberately and consciously different' from the other castles of north Wales and intended to be 'the viceregal centre of the new order'.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, despite Caernarfon's role as the English 'capital of north Wales', and the discord undoubtedly created by military conquest and the clearance of the pre-existing Welsh community, not only were Welsh persons expected to trade in the borough marketplace from its very inception but at least a small number of Welshmen worked on the construction of the castle-borough.<sup>29</sup> Welsh men and women were almost certainly living there as labourers and servants thereafter. It is noteworthy that in Caernarfon's earliest surviving borough court records, of the 1360s onwards, the majority of those servants of English townsmen and women who came before the borough court were Welsh.<sup>30</sup>

In Edward I's most remote new towns of Castell y Bere and Harlech, lacking the symbolic importance of Caernarfon and positioned in areas likely to have received a minimum of immigrating English burgesses, pretensions of English exclusivity dissolved much more quickly. In 1293, just nine years after their

inception, these fledgling communities housed only sixteen and twelve taxpayers, respectively, nearly half of whom had typically Welsh names.<sup>31</sup> When, in the following autumn of 1294, Madog ap Llywelyn raised the standard of revolt in north Wales and the English residents of Harlech were forced to take shelter within the castle, a list of those sojourning inside includes Welshman Madog Crach ('crak'), the third most highly taxed of Harlech's townsmen in 1293, as well as one Richard Bach.<sup>32</sup> These men felt a greater affinity, or at least safer, with their fellow townsmen than with the enemy at the gates – notable is the absence of other Welsh taxpayers of 1293. And equally, the castle constable was willing to tolerate their presence in spite of the hostile ethnic dimension of his predicament.

Taken together, the urban environments of Caernarfon and Harlech do much to illuminate the culture, or cultures, which existed in towns of military-economic origins founded on green-field or cleared sites intended for English occupation. While the prejudices embedded in new English boroughs by notions of military and urban cultural superiority could prove potent in perpetuating the exclusion of Welshmen from the guild merchant in towns such as Caernarfon, which enjoyed moderate levels of English immigration and prosperity, such prejudices could easily prove only skin deep in isolated and struggling boroughs in need of investment in human and mercantile capital.<sup>33</sup> The culture of these towns was one of selective intolerance. During times of ethnic tension, Welsh burgesses might be excluded from certain borough privileges or offices, as happened at Cardigan during the period of Edward I's conquest of Snowdonia in the later thirteenth century.<sup>34</sup> During times of peace, Welsh men and women might hold burgage property without incident. As Edward Lewis observed, 'English burgesses naturally endeavoured to preserve the integrity of their privileges . . . [and] were loath to suffer any diminution of their economic and commercial status'.<sup>35</sup> Where Welsh investment in burgage property was beneficial to the lifeblood of a town, or at least benign to the prosperity of English burgesses, it was tolerated. When it was non-essential, and particularly if perceived as politically (that is, during Welsh hostilities) or economically detrimental, Welshmen were targets of exclusion.<sup>36</sup> A medieval traveller visiting these green-field towns of mixed military-economic origin c.1300 would have observed Welsh persons buying and selling in the market and working as labourers and servants, but would have encountered only a small number of Welsh householders and traders, unless he should be stopping off in one of the more remote of these boroughs.

The only methods by which Welsh townsmen and women could insure themselves against the potentialities of exclusion from burges status and property, or against other discrimination in most towns of military-economic origin – other norms withstanding where English settlement was superimposed on an existing Welsh community (see below) – were to pay for the right to enjoy English legal status or to invest in property within a parallel urban

foundation of wholly non-military origin. The purchase of English legal status by Welsh burgesses is evidenced in the post-conquest Principality from the 1390s, and evidenced in the Denbighshire borough of Ruthin, where English urbanity was superimposed on a fledgling Welsh town, as early as 1350.<sup>37</sup> It seems unlikely, however, that this option was widely available, c.1300, to most potential Welsh burgesses of towns of military-economic origin. Potential for Welsh burgesses to insure against exclusion from all of their property on grounds of ethnicity could also take the form of investment in a nearby borough of predominantly economic origin or in rural property. For example, some of the Welsh tenants of the military-economic foundation New Carmarthen invested in the nearby, and more ethnically mixed, economic boroughs of Old Carmarthen and Abergwili.<sup>38</sup> More generally, where new boroughs of mixed military-economic origin were founded in close proximity, or 'parallel', to pre-existing towns containing a largely Welsh population, strong cross-investment by Welsh and English burgesses took place. Frequently, these towns grew into a single settlement, with growth seeming to favour the newer foundations with better defined or stronger economic privileges – although, as proven by the long-term coexistence of Old and New Carmarthen, parallel settlements could sometimes persist indefinitely (see section below, 'Urban clusters'). At Aberystwyth, founded in 1277 on the Ceredigion coast about a mile from the long-established Welsh community of Llanbadarn Fawr, the new borough became, by majority, Welsh within twenty-five years.<sup>39</sup> Aberystwyth eventually absorbed the older, prescriptive town of Llanbadarn Fawr when in 1303 it acquired a legal trading monopoly within a fifteen-mile radius of the new borough, although the Aberystwyth burgesses felt the need to petition to have this privilege reaffirmed by Edward of Caernarfon (the future Edward II) two years later, as perhaps some traders were reluctant to relocate to the new borough.<sup>40</sup> A similar situation existed at Dinefwr, c.1300, where in parallel to the long-established hilltop castle-borough of Old Dinefwr, of Welsh origin and populated almost exclusively by Welsh tenants, the borough of New Dinefwr was planted on nearby castle demesnes in the hope of attracting English immigrant burgesses as an economic stimulus.<sup>41</sup> This new foundation 'appropriated' the liberties of Old Dinefwr, but in this instance the old borough was not disbanded.<sup>42</sup> In the first part of the fourteenth century, New Dinefwr's growth led it to eclipse the old borough, both in the number of burgesses and rents to the lord.<sup>43</sup> However, some of New Dinefwr's first burgesses were in fact burgesses of Old Dinefwr capitalizing on the availability of new burgage property.<sup>44</sup> Hence, where Welsh burgesses were welcomed in new, parallel foundations with better defined urban liberties, such boroughs benefited by the growth achieved through the relocation of locally established Welsh traders and tradesmen.

In contrast to this conclusion, the research of Keith Lilley has made much of the establishment of new parallel communities or market centres, with- in or

very near to Welsh settlements, as tools of an Anglo-Norman elite determined 'to recentre the [local] commercial focus' in such a way as to 'ensure that the Welsh . . . were made "outsiders" in their own land'.<sup>45</sup> However, while ethnic displacement by Anglo-Norman lords undeniably took place in some isolated instances (for example, Mamouth, Waterford [Ireland]),<sup>46</sup> in light of the evidence of tenant and taxpayer lists this position may overstate the political-ideological significance of parallel communities in Wales. As William Rees long ago asserted of Anglo-Norman settlement in medieval south Wales, 'it may be established as a general rule, that economic expediency rather than political passion is the guiding principle in conquest'. The very fact that a new military-economic borough might be founded in close proximity to an existing settlement or market, in preference to clearing away and replacing the existing settlement, as was undertaken at Caernarfon, is recognition of the primacy of economic expedience over the imperatives of a 'political passion' for exclusively non-native urban settlements.

The weakness of such political passions is illustrated by the willingness, already mentioned, of the burgesses of even Edward I's politically charged military-economic castle boroughs to accept Welsh burgesses into towns sufficiently remote to have lacked adequate English immigration and investment to develop without them (for example, Harlech and Castell y Bere). Similarly, the development of the parallel communities discussed here suggests the primacy of economic expedience, both at Aberystwyth, where Llanbadarn Fawr's Welsh traders were welcomed into the new borough, and at New Dinefwr, near to which Old Dinefwr continued in existence with its burgesses allowed to invest in the new borough.<sup>47</sup> In neither of these locations was the new town used to promote the exclusivity of market rights for an English elite. In the first instance the townsmen of Aberystwyth, half of whom were themselves Welsh, took advantage of their position within the politically influential castle-borough to promote the prosperity of their own trading community through the banning of trade at nearby Llanbadarn Fawr. At Dinefwr the new borough was created not to replace, but rather to supplement, the economic potential of the old borough. And ethnic Welsh displacement from the heart of the borough economy is less likely to have been relevant to the creation of the New Dinefwr than the perception that attracting English burgesses might serve as an advantageous stimulus to urban life; especially as Old Dinefwr was competing for local trade with the nearby, and likewise predominantly Welsh, town of Llandeilo.

Further refuting the ideological primacy of ethnic-economic exclusion in the creation of all new boroughs is Edward I's castle-borough of Conwy, founded in 1283 across the Conwy estuary from the ethnically mixed Anglo-Welsh town of Degannwy. Degannwy had itself had been granted markets and fairs by Henry III in 1250, but had since fallen upon hard times after being sacked by Llywelyn ap Gruffydd in 1263.<sup>48</sup> The creation of the castleborough of Conwy was part of

a larger political programme of conquest and economic reorganization, which overwrote pre-existing Welsh and Anglo-Welsh development with equal indifference, and in which the logical and militarily defensible siting of new castles with towns adjoining was of prime importance. Further, the growth of Conwy, due to a concerted programme of burgess recruitment coupled with the economic stimulus of castle and town-wall construction, actually led to a revival of nearby Degannwy's anaemic fortunes. Degannwy's market, which seems to have fallen into abeyance between 1263 and 1283, had reappeared by 1290.<sup>49</sup> And the borough grew from as few as six burgages in 1295 to twenty-one burgesses in 1305, many of whom, like Welshman Moelwyn *faber*, by that time also held property in Conwy.<sup>50</sup> Hence, for the community of Degannwy, the creation of the competing borough of Conwy both ignored the commercial interests of Degannwy's established English burgesses, and provided new opportunities for Degannwy's Welsh burgesses. While a visitor to parallel communities in Wales, c.1300, would undoubtedly have found inter-borough economic competition and competitive discord between the parallel towns' burgesses, this competition and discord would not in most localities have been born primarily of ethnic tensions.

The final group of towns of mixed military-economic origin (Table 6.1) is that of communities where an English borough was superimposed, through the granting of urban liberties and promotion of English immigration, onto a pre-existing Welsh settlement. In these towns, of which the aforementioned borough of Degannwy is a likely if poorly documented example, there was a high degree of Anglo-Welsh integration and shared administration.<sup>51</sup> Perhaps the best documented of these towns is the Denbighshire borough of Ruthin, where a Welsh community focused on a native fortification was granted a 'foundation charter' shortly after the area was transferred to English control in 1282.<sup>52</sup> At Ruthin, the borough was governed by a lordappointed steward and 'the twelve of Ruthin', a group of six Welsh and six English prominent townsmen, appointed for six-month terms.<sup>53</sup> Together, the twelve of Ruthin set borough regulation and acted as a jury of presentment at the borough's bi-annual *magna curia*, where regulatory offences and serious crimes were prosecuted.<sup>54</sup>

The urban culture of such towns, c.1300, was one of ethnic tolerance and economic interdependence. At Ruthin, the Welsh community was historically focused on Welsh Street and the English community founded on adjoining Castle Street. But a tenant list of 1324 indicates that neither of these streets was any longer entirely in the hands of Welsh or English property holders, and beyond these streets, burgesses lived on a number of highly mixed streets where property readily changed hands between English and Welsh tenants.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, while certain trades were predominantly engaged in by either Welsh or English burgesses, these trades were not ethnically exclusive and were often interdependent. For example, most of Ruthin's weavers were Welsh and tailors



were English, with English craftsmen finishing cloth woven by Welsh hands, and yet the only tailor to be named to the borough's governing 'twelve' between 1312 and 1321 was Welshman Cynwrig *cissor*, 'cutter'.<sup>56</sup> Thus, among all towns of mixed military-economic origin, it is in such towns as Ruthin, where English urbanity was superimposed on a fledgling Welsh community, that some of the most thoroughly mixed and interconnected Anglo-Welsh urban communities and economies are to be found. It is in such towns that the urban populations, c.1300, were typically closest to half Welsh and half English. Only those towns of predominantly economic origin which received significant English immigration, particularly where English immigration was promoted by the lord (for example, St Davids, see above) were as thoroughly mixed.

### *Urban clusters*

The product of this variety of towns, of different origin types, is that in early fourteenth-century Wales multiple towns, often with diverse origins, coexisted in close proximity. It is easy to think of Wales, by the early fourteenth century, as primarily a landscape of lowland vales each focused on a borough with a market exercising a local trading monopoly. Indeed, this was the case in some parts of Wales, such as the Marcher lordship of Dyffryn Clwyd, where the lordship contained only one borough and market, at Ruthin, centrally located within a lordship which itself largely followed the lowland contours of the Vale of Clwyd. However, as already touched upon in discussing towns of military-economic origin founded in parallel to an existing community, this was often not the case. In addition to the pairings of 'parallel' communities already discussed, urban clusters of two or more economically interdependent communities within a few miles of each other existed, among other places, at Cardigan and Cilgerran, Adpar and Newcastle Emlyn (Cardiganshire), and, arguably, in a more diffuse cluster around the Menai Strait, including Caernarfon, Newborough, Bangor and Beaumaris.

The competing interests of various secular and ecclesiastical landlords, or the creation of new urban foundations which did not totally supersede pre-existing market centres, made for complex local urban systems in which multiple urban foci coexisted to vie for the commerce and capital of local peasants and visiting merchants. In some instances one dominant borough emerged, eventually relegating its neighbours to little more than suburbs with independent market privileges (for example, Conwy's dominance over Degannwy), while in other instances urban centres in close proximity eventually merged into one settlement (for example, Aberystwyth and Llanbadarn Fawr). And, in most instances, each town in the urban cluster had a distinctly different ethnic composition (for example, Old and New Dinefwr, clustered with nearby Llandeilo).<sup>57</sup> Recognizing the existence of, and understanding the dynamic relationships between, towns in these urban clusters is important to understanding the development of towns of all origin types.

The urban cluster of the boroughs Old Carmarthen, New Carmarthen and Abergwili, c.1300, is a good example of local complexity, highlighted by the survival of early fourteenth-century rentals for both New Carmarthen and Abergwili.<sup>58</sup> Old Carmarthen was an ethnically mixed ecclesiastical borough of pre-Norman origin near the north bank of the river Towy, under the lordship of the prior of the Augustinian priory of St John the Baptist and St Teulyddog. New Carmarthen was a green-field borough of military-economic origin focused on a Norman castle built some 300 yards west of Old Carmarthen, enjoying a charter of generous privileges, confirmed by Henry III in 1274, and a role as the administrative centre of royal holdings in south-west Wales.<sup>59</sup> Lastly, the borough of Abergwili, about two miles to the east of Old and New Carmarthen, developed on lands held by the bishop of St Davids very near to the site of a collegiate church founded by Bishop Bek in 1287. The founding of the collegiate church may alone have provided adequate stimulus to encourage organic urban growth at Abergwili; however, it is likely that Bishop Bek extended burgage privileges to a pre-existing community in the hope of tapping into the growing urban trade and prosperity of Old and New Carmarthen, the latter of which, for example, provided the lord Edward with no less than 70 per cent of all profit he could expect from his Carmarthenshire estates in 1268.<sup>60</sup> By 1326, Abergwili was holding its own annual fair and a weekly market, held on Fridays, the day before New Carmarthen's weekly Saturday market.<sup>61</sup>

Around the year 1300, Old Carmarthen, New Carmarthen and Abergwili all featured organized burgage plots held by burgesses enjoying legal privileges which distinguished each community's burgesses both from their neighbours in the open countryside and from the townsmen of the other two boroughs. Together the three boroughs, c.1300, contained about 335½ burgage plots: 100 burgages at Old Carmarthen (1281–1307); 181½ burgages held by 141 burgesses in New Carmarthen (1302) and 54 burgages held by 26 burgesses at Abergwili (1326).<sup>62</sup> Applying a population multiplier of four or five to this burgage total (assuming a typical burgage household to contain two adults and two to three children/servants) this would suggest a minimum overall population of some 1,340–1,680 souls. Given the realities of burgage accumulation and subdivision, particularly for subletting to undocumented non-property-holding subtenants, the area's overall urban population c.1300 was likely 2,000 or more souls, a substantial urban population by contemporary Welsh or indeed English standards.<sup>63</sup>

While competition for commerce, and sometimes mutual antagonism, existed between the lords of these three boroughs – prior, king and bishop – as well as between the burgesses themselves, the prosperity of all parties concerned was highly interdependent. Competition and antagonism were expressed by periodic disputes, particularly over town rights to monopolize trade and the collection of tolls on any one lord's lands within a certain radius of his town. For example, from 1280 onwards Edward I's borough of New

Carmarthen claimed a monopoly over organized trading within a five-league (15-mile) radius of the borough, a privilege confirmed by Edward II in 1313, perhaps in light of additional mercantile competition from the Bishop of St Davids' new borough of Abergwili.<sup>64</sup> And yet New Carmarthen's monopoly was unenforceable both in nearby Abergwili and in Old Carmarthen, a mere 300 yards away, where the lord and prior of Old Carmarthen would, in 1353, go so far as to imprison the reeve of New Carmarthen for entering the old borough to attempt the collection of tolls there.<sup>65</sup> Similarly, in 1355 Edward III would challenge the independence of Old Carmarthen at Assize before the Justiciar of South Wales, in proceedings at New Carmarthen.<sup>66</sup>

Nevertheless, it was no doubt the collective concentration of industry and trade, much of which was maritime trade via the Towy, across all three boroughs that led to their late thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century growth – New Carmarthen increasing from 167 to 181½ burgage tenements between 1268 and 1320 while Abergwili burgesses established 54 burgages between 1287 and 1326.<sup>67</sup> This growth, in turn, culminated in 1326 with New Carmarthen's recognition as a staple port with license to deal in wool, pelts, leather, lead and tin, but the advantages this brought would have been felt in all three boroughs.<sup>68</sup> By the early fourteenth century, individual burgesses often held burgage tenements in two or even all three Towy-valley towns, thereby accessing commercial privileges in each borough, cementing the boroughs' shared fortunes. For example, members of the Wynter family, which would provide a number of canons and priors of Old Carmarthen in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, owned six burgages in New Carmarthen in 1302 and had by 1326 bought up 20½ of Abergwili's 54 burgage tenements.<sup>69</sup> Likewise, in 1302 John Bertelot, burgess of Old Carmarthen, held just under two burgages in New Carmarthen, and by 1326 his probable kinsman Adam Bertelot held a further two burgage tenements in Abergwili.<sup>70</sup> Similarly, the prior of Old Carmarthen himself, in 1302, held 1½ burgages in new Carmarthen.<sup>71</sup>

Despite these boroughs' close links, each town retained a different urban culture, in terms of both ethnicity and of property ownership and subdivision, which would have been apparent to a contemporary traveller. New Carmarthen was very much a colonial settlement of military-economic origin. In 1302 only about 10 per cent (15 of 141) of New Carmarthen's burgesses had obviously Welsh names.<sup>72</sup> New Carmarthen was also relatively densely populated. About half of the town's burgesses possessed land in addition to their partial or whole burgages, but these additional holdings were often as little as a few feet or rods of property; the number of burgage plots outstripped the number of burgesses by about 30 per cent and holdings as small as one-third of a burgage were common, indicating significant levels of property accumulation and subdivision.<sup>73</sup> These latter characteristics, coupled with relatively low fixed burgage rents of 1s. per annum, suggest that there existed ample scope for the profitable subletting of partial burgages in a period of urban growth such as

existed in later thirteenth-century New Carmarthen.

By comparison, in 1326 about 35 per cent (9 of 26) Abergwili burgesses had obviously Welsh names, suggesting that Welsh participation in the town's development had probably been welcomed from its foundation. The population density of Abergwili was markedly lower than that of New Carmarthen. As with New Carmarthen, about half of the burgesses possessed land in addition to burgage property, but in Abergwili this additional property most often amounted to an acre ('stang') or more. The town was overwhelmingly dominated by a small group of burgesses, with Philip ap Dafydd, John Lippa and a few members of the Wynter family together holding 30 of the borough's 54 burgages.<sup>74</sup> But nevertheless, burgage holdings including a part burgage were rare, with fewer than 15 per cent of burgesses possessing a partial burgage (as either part or all of his or her holdings). Hence, as closely linked as New Carmarthen and Abergwili were, through a largely shared economy and even common burgesses, the realities of living in each community would have been very different; and such differences were no doubt similarly manifest between communities in other urban clusters.

*Conclusion*

As regards property holding and ethnicity, there existed not one but many urban cultures in early fourteenth-century Wales. As demonstrated by this survey, the urban society a contemporary traveller might have expected to encounter in any given town would have been closely tied to that town's origins. On the whole, towns of predominantly economic origin tended to contain a higher proportion of Welsh burgesses than towns of mixed military-economic origin. Nevertheless, the proportion of a town's burgesses which was Welsh was also highly specific to that community, depending on where it was located in relation to both England and other communities, whether the local lord had organized English immigration, and even the topography of the surrounding landscape. And, as exemplified by urban clusters, such as existed around Old and New Carmarthen, highly distinct urban cultures coexisted in close proximity.

**Table 6.2 Tenant and taxpayer lists, c.1300**

Town name	Town county	Rental- (R) / tax- (T) year	Tenants/ tax-payers	Data Source
Abergele	Denbighshire	(R) 1311	22	J. Williams, <i>The Records of Denbigh and its Lordship</i> (Wrexham, 1860), pp. 221–2.
Abergwili	Carmarthenshire	(R) 1326	26	J. W. Willis-Bund (ed.), <i>The Black Book of St David's</i> (London, 1902), pp. 243–5.
Aberystwyth	Cardiganshire	(R) 1302	112	I. J. Sanders, 'The boroughs of Aberystwyth and Cardigan in the early fourteenth century', <i>Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies</i> , 15 (1954), 282–93.
Adpar	Cardiganshire	(R) 1326	98	Willis-Bund (ed.), <i>The Black Book</i> , pp. 219–29.
Beaumaris	Anglesey	(R) 1306	79	Anon., 'Extent of burgages, lands, etc., assigned for the castle of Beaumaris', <i>Archaeologia Cambrensis</i> , supplement 1 (1877), xvi–xix.
Caernarfon	Caernarfonshire	(R) 1298	62	T. Jones Pierce and J. Griffiths, 'Documents relating to the early history of the borough of Caernarvon', <i>Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies</i> , 9 (1937–1939), 236–46.
Caerwys	Flintshire	(T) 1293	43	The National Archives (TNA), E 179/242/52.
Cardigan	Cardiganshire	(R) 1301	100	Sanders, 'The boroughs of Aberystwyth and Cardigan', 282–93.
Carmarthen, New	Carmarthenshire	(R) 1302	141	TNA, SC 2/215/32.
Castell y Bere	Merionethshire	(T) 1293	16	K. Williams-Jones, <i>The Merioneth Lay Subsidy Roll, 1292–3</i> (Cardiff, 1976), pp. 51–2.
Cilgerran	Pembrokeshire	(T) 1293	22	H. Owen (ed.), <i>A Calendar of the Public Records Relating to Pembrokeshire</i> , vol. 2 (London, 1914), pp. 10–11; with corrections taken from F. Jones, 'The subsidy roll of 1292', <i>Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies</i> , 13 (1948–50), 213–30.

**Table 6.2b Tenant and taxpayer lists, c.1300**

Town name	Town county	Rental- (R) / tax- (T) year	Tenants/ tax-payers	Data Source
Conwy	Caernarfonshire	(R) 1306	113	J. Griffiths, 'Documents relating to the early history of Conway', <i>Caernarfonshire Historical Society Transactions</i> , 8 (1947), 5–19.
Degannwy	Caernarfonshire	(R) 1306	21	Griffiths, 'Documents relating to the early history of Conway', 5–19.
Denbigh	Denbighshire	(R) 1305	39	Williams, <i>The Records of Denbigh</i> , pp. 120–4.
Dinefwr, Old	Carmarthenshire	(R) 1303	18	E. A. Lewis, 'Dynevor: materials illustrating the history of Dynevor and Newton from the earliest times to the close of the reign of Henry VIII', <i>West Wales Historical Records</i> , 1 (1910–11), 145–224.
Dinefwr, New	Carmarthenshire	(R) 1303	40	Lewis, 'Dynevor', 145–224.
Diserth	Flintshire	(T) 1293	12	TNA, E 179/242/52.
Dolgellau	Merionethshire	(T) 1293	3	Williams-Jones, <i>The Merioneth Lay Subsidy</i> , pp. 49–50.
Flint	Flintshire	(T) 1293	76	TNA, E 179/242/52.
Harlech	Merionethshire	(T) 1293	12	Williams-Jones, <i>The Merioneth Lay Subsidy</i> , pp. 65–6.
Holt	Denbighshire	(R) 1315	146	T. P. Ellis (ed.), <i>The First Extent of Bromfield and Yale, A.D. 1315</i> (London, 1924), pp. 38–47.
Hope	Flintshire	(T) 1293	35	TNA, E 179/242/52.
Knighton	Radnorshire	(T) 1293	71	M. A. Faraday, 'The assessment for the fifteenth of 1293 on Radnor and other Marcher lordships, part I', <i>The Radnorshire Society Transactions</i> (1973), 79–85.
Lampeter	Cardiganshire	(R) 1303	21	I. J. Sanders, 'The borough of Lampeter in the early fourteenth century', <i>Ceredigion</i> , 4 (1961), 136–45.

**Table 6.2c Tenant and taxpayer lists, c.1300**

Town name	Town county	Rental- (R) / tax- (T) year	Tenants/ tax-payers	Data Source
Llandeilo	Carmarthenshire	(R) 1326	14	Willis-Bund (ed.), <i>The Black Book</i> , pp. 262–9.
Llangadog	Carmarthenshire	(R) 1326	33	Willis-Bund (ed.), <i>The Black Book</i> , pp. 27–9.
Llanidloes	Montgomeryshire	(T) 1293	13	R. Morgan, 'A Powys lay subsidy roll, 1293', <i>Montgomeryshire Collections</i> , 71 (1983), 91–112.
Llawhaden	Pembrokeshire	(R) 1326	130	Willis-Bund (ed.), <i>The Black Book</i> , pp. 276–9.
Machynlleth	Montgomeryshire	(T) 1293	61	Morgan, 'A Powys lay subsidy roll', 91–112.
Mostyn	Flintshire	(T) 1293	20	TNA, E 179/242/52.
Nefyn	Caernarfonshire	(T) 1293	93	T. Jones Pierce, 'Two early Caernarvonshire accounts', <i>Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies</i> , 5 (1929–31), 142–56.
New Moat	Pembrokeshire	(R) 1326	45	Willis-Bund (ed.), <i>The Black Book</i> , pp. 126–35.
Overton	Flintshire	(T) 1293	56	TNA, E 179/242/52.
Presteigne	Radnorshire	(T) 1293	17	Faraday, 'The assessment for the fifteenth of 1293', 79–85.
Pwllheli	Caernarfonshire	(T) 1293	21	T. Jones Pierce, 'A Lleyl lay subsidy account', <i>Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies</i> , 5 (1929–31), 54–71.
Rhuddlan	Flintshire	(T) 1293	75	TNA, E 179/242/52.
Ruthin	Denbighshire	(R) 1324	72	Jack, R. I., 'Records of Denbighshire lordships II – the lordship of Dyffryn Clwyd in 1324', <i>Denbighshire Historical Society Transactions</i> , 17 (1968), 7–53.
St Davids	Pembrokeshire	(R) 1326	130	Willis-Bund (ed.), <i>The Black Book</i> , pp. 13–37.
Trefnant	Montgomeryshire	(T) 1293	18	Morgan, 'A Powys lay subsidy roll', 91–112.

**Table 6.2d Tenant and taxpayer lists, c.1300**

Town name	Town county	Rental- (R) / tax- (T) year	Tenants/ tax-payers	Data Source
Tywyn	Merionethshire	(T) 1293	9	Williams-Jones, <i>The Merioneth Lay Subsidy Roll</i> , p. 30.
Welshpool	Montgomeryshire	(T) 1293	106	Morgan, 'A Powis lay subsidy roll', 91–112.
Wrexham	Denbighshire	(R) 1315	49	Ellis (ed.), <i>The First Extent of Bromfield and Yale</i> , pp. 47–57.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>M. DeWolf-Hemmeon, *Burgage Tenure in Medieval England* (Oxford, 1914) remains a sound and accessible overview of burgesses' privileges.

<sup>2</sup>For example, in north-west Wales: E.A. Lewis, *The Mediaeval Boroughs of Snowdonia* (London, 1912), pp. 174–6.

<sup>3</sup>In some towns, it was possible to purchase burgess rights annually, for example, in New Carmarthen in 1302 (The National Archives (TNA), SC 2/215/32) or Llandeilo in 1326 (J. W. Willis-Bund (ed.), *The Black Book of St David's* (London, 1902), pp. 262–9). However, as the rights purchased were impermanent, and their extent is unknown, these burgesses-by-licence have been excluded from the general discussion below.

<sup>4</sup>R. A. Griffiths, 'Wales and the Marches', in D. Palliser (ed.), *Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, vol. 1, c.600–c.1540 (Cambridge, 2000), p. 699, p. 706.

<sup>5</sup>For narrative accounts see Griffiths, 'Wales and the Marches', pp. 681–714; I. Soulsby, *The Towns of Medieval Wales* (Chichester, 1983), pp. 7–19.

<sup>6</sup>Lewis, *The Mediaeval Boroughs of Snowdonia*, pp. 174–80; M. Stevens, *Urban Assimilation in Post-Conquest Wales: Ethnicity, Gender and Economy in Ruthin, 1282–1348* (Cardiff, 2010), pp. 13–18.

<sup>7</sup>Soulsby, *Towns of Medieval Wales*, pp. 13–15.

<sup>8</sup>While the obscure origins of many Welsh towns makes it difficult to establish quantitatively, urban creations of this latter kind were almost certainly most common from the early thirteenth century, by which time the



non-military profits of urbanization in Wales were widely manifest to both secular and ecclesiastical landlords. See Soulsby, *Towns of Medieval Wales*, pp. 68–9; Lewis, *Mediaeval Boroughs of Snowdonia*, pp. 197–9.

<sup>9</sup>Soulsby, *Towns of Medieval Wales*, pp. 152–4 (Kidwelly); K. Williams-Jones, ‘Caernarvon’, in R. A. Griffiths (ed.), *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales* (Cardiff, 1978), p. 73.

<sup>10</sup>R. A. Griffiths, ‘Carmarthen’ in Griffiths (ed.), *Boroughs of Medieval Wales*, pp. 138–40; Soulsby, *Towns of Medieval Wales*, pp. 110–15 (Conwy), pp. 120–1 (Degannwy).

<sup>11</sup>R. I. Jack, ‘Welsh and English in the medieval lordship of Ruthin’, *Denbighshire Historical Society Transactions*, 18 (1969), 23–49; Soulsby, *Towns of Medieval Wales*, pp. 109–10.

<sup>12</sup>Eight of the eighteen towns of economic origin listed here had parish churches dedicated to Welsh saints: Abergwili, Hope, Llandeilo, Llangadog, Llawhaden, Pwllheli, St. David’s, Tywyn.

<sup>13</sup>Soulsby, *Towns of Medieval Wales*, p. 265.

<sup>14</sup>P. G. Barton, ‘Welshpool burgages and burgesses from 1241 to 1485: the Lilleshall Abbey leases’, *Montgomeryshire Collections*, 95 (2007), 33–4; K. D. Lilley, “‘Non urbe, non vico, non castris’: territorial control and the colonization and urbanization of Wales and Ireland under Anglo-Norman lordship”, *Journal of Historical Geography*, 26 (2000), 520–3.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 34; R. Morgan, ‘A Powys lay subsidy roll: 1293’, *Montgomeryshire Collections*, 71 (1983), 111–12.

<sup>16</sup>Soulsby, *Towns of Medieval Wales*, p. 238; Willis-Bund (ed.), *The Black Book*, pp. 13–37.

<sup>17</sup>Willis-Bund (ed.), *The Black Book*, pp. 276–9.

<sup>18</sup>Soulsby, *Towns of Medieval Wales*, pp. 68–9; also, see below, under ‘Urban Clusters’.

<sup>19</sup>Soulsby, *Towns of Medieval Wales*, p. 149, fig. 47.

<sup>20</sup>TNA, E 179/242/52.

<sup>21</sup>Soulsby, *Towns of Medieval Wales*, pp. 148–9.

<sup>22</sup>Griffiths, ‘Wales and the Marches’, p. 706.

<sup>23</sup>Soulsby, *Towns of Medieval Wales*, p. 149 (fig. 47), p. 161 (fig. 53).

<sup>24</sup>R. A. Griffiths, ‘Aberystwyth’ in Griffiths (ed.), *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales*, p. 28.

<sup>25</sup>Lewis, *The Mediaeval Boroughs of Snowdonia*, p. 291, citing TNA, SC 8/161/8001; D. H. Owen, ‘Denbigh’ in Griffiths (ed.), *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales*, pp. 165, 181–2.

<sup>26</sup>Lewis, *The Mediaeval Boroughs of Snowdonia*, pp. 41–2, 258–61.

<sup>27</sup>T. Jones Pierce and J. Griffiths, ‘Documents relating to the early history of



the borough of Caernarvon', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 9 (1937–1939), 236–46.

<sup>28</sup>Williams-Jones, 'Caernarvon', pp. 75–6, citing A. J. Taylor in H. M. Colvin (ed.), *The History of the King's Works: The Middle Ages*, vol. 1 (London, 1963), pp. 369–70.

<sup>29</sup>Williams-Jones, 'Caernarvon', pp. 76, 94–5.

<sup>30</sup>G. Jones and H. Owen (eds), *Caernarvon Court Rolls, 1361–1402* (Caernarfon, 1951), pp. 15–177.

<sup>31</sup>K. Williams-Jones, *The Merioneth Lay Subsidy Roll, 1292–3* (Cardiff, 1976), pp. 51–2, 65–6.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid, pp. 65–6; J. Griffiths, 'Documents relating to the rebellion of Madoc, 1294–5', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 8 (1935–1937), on p. 150.

<sup>33</sup>Keith Lilley has written on Anglo-Norman and English notions of urbanity and civility. Lilley, "Non urbe, non vico, non castris", 518–20.

<sup>34</sup>R. A. Griffiths, *Conquerors and Conquered in Medieval Wales* (Stroud, 1994), pp. 287–93.

<sup>35</sup>Lewis, *The Mediaeval Boroughs of Snowdonia*, p. 257.

<sup>36</sup>See above, the likely motivations of the English burgesses of Hope. Note 22 and accompanying text.

<sup>37</sup>Lewis, *The Mediaeval Boroughs of Snowdonia*, p. 256; TNA, SC 2/218/1, m. 7 (Ruthin).

<sup>38</sup>James observed that Meilyr Vychan, burgess and eventual reeve of New Carmarthen, both accumulated nearby rural estates and was involved in grants of property to the prior (that is, lord) of Old Carmarthen. T. James, 'Medieval Carmarthen and its burgesses: a study of town growth and burgess families in the later thirteenth century', *The Carmarthenshire Antiquary*, 25 (1989), 22–3. Similarly, two somewhat garbled Welsh names appearing in the 1302 tenant list of New Carmarthen, Gwilym ap Adda and 'Dygon' Forch [Fforch], seem to correspond with names in the 1326 tenant list of Abergwili. TNA, SC 2/215/32; Willis-Bund (ed.), *Black Book*, pp. 243–5.

<sup>39</sup>I. J. Sanders, 'The boroughs of Aberystwyth and Cardigan in the early fourteenth century', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 15 (1954), 287–9.

<sup>40</sup>Griffiths, 'Aberystwyth', pp. 33–4.

<sup>41</sup>E. A. Lewis, 'Materials illustrating the history of Dynevor and Newtown from the earliest times to the close of the reign of Henry VIII', *West Wales Historical Records*, 1 (1910–11), on p. 149; Soulsby, *Towns of Medieval Wales*, pp. 127–8.

<sup>42</sup>Lewis, 'Materials illustrating the history of Dynevor and Newtown', p. 149.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., pp. 181–3.

<sup>44</sup>For example, Dafydd Goch and Ieuan ab Iorwerth. Ibid., pp. 181–2.

<sup>45</sup>“Non urbe, non vico, non castris”, p. 523.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., pp. 524–5.

<sup>47</sup>W. Rees, *South Wales and the March, 1284–1415: A Social and Agrarian Study* (Oxford, 1924), p. 1.

<sup>48</sup>Soulsby, *Towns of Medieval Wales*, p. 111, p. 120.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 120; J. Griffiths, ‘Documents relating to the early history of Conway’ *Caernarvonshire Historical Society Transactions*, 8 (1947), 5–19.

<sup>50</sup>Griffiths, ‘Documents relating to the early history of Conway’, 5–19.

<sup>51</sup>Soulsby, *Towns of Medieval Wales*, p. 120.

<sup>52</sup>Stevens, *Urban Assimilation*, pp. 11–12, 19–20.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., pp. 63–73.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., pp. 39–40; R. I. Jack, ‘Records of Denbighshire lordships II – the lordship of Dyffryn Clwyd in 1324’, *Denbighshire Historical Society Transactions*, 17 (1968), 7–53.

<sup>56</sup>Stevens, *Urban Assimilation*, pp. 234–5, 238–9.

<sup>57</sup>Each of these pairings is discussed above under the subheading ‘B. Towns of military-economic origin’.

<sup>58</sup>TNA, SC 2/215/32 (New Carmarthen); Willis-Bund (ed.), *The Black Book*, pp. 243–5.

<sup>59</sup>These, and preceding points in this paragraph, are drawn from Griffiths, ‘Carmarthen’, pp. 140–5.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 150.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 150; Soulsby, *Towns of Medieval Wales*, p. 69.

<sup>62</sup>Old Carmarthen: 100 burgages is the estimate of James, based on a mid-fourteenth-century legal case of Edward III which suggests there were 100 burgages rented at 1s. each during the reign of Edward I. James, ‘Medieval Carmarthen’, p. 12; T. Phillips (ed.), *Cartularium S. John Bapt de Caermaethen* (Cheltenham, 1865), no. 119. New Carmarthen: TNA, SC 2/215/32. Abergwili: Willis-Bund (ed.), *The Black Book*, pp. 243–5.

<sup>63</sup>James has estimated 2,000 souls in Old and New Carmarthen alone. James, ‘Medieval Carmarthen’, pp. 13–14. For contemporary urban hierarchy see A. Dyer, ‘Appendix: ranking lists of English medieval towns’, in Palliser (ed.), *Cambridge Urban History*, vol. 1, p. 747. For a full discussion of the relationships between borough population, burgage accumulation and subdivision see Stevens, *Urban Assimilation*, pp. 27–59.

<sup>64</sup>Griffiths, ‘Carmarthen’, p. 147, p. 154.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 154.

<sup>66</sup>Edward III unsuccessfully claimed at the assizes before the Justiciar of

South Wales that Old Carmarthen had been annexed to New Carmarthen during the reign of Edward I. James, 'Medieval Carmarthen', p. 12; Phillips (ed.), *Cartularium*, no. 119.

<sup>67</sup>Griffiths, 'Carmarthen', p. 149; TNA, SC 2/215/32; Willis-Bund (ed.), *The Black Book*, pp. 243–5.

<sup>68</sup>Soulsby, *Towns of Medieval Wales*, p. 103.

<sup>69</sup>James, 'Medieval Carmarthen', 24; TNA, SC 2/215/32; Willis-Bund (ed.), *The Black Book*, pp. 243–5.

<sup>70</sup>James, 'Medieval Carmarthen', p. 18; TNA, SC 2/215/32; Willis-Bund (ed.), *The Black Book*, p. 245.

<sup>71</sup>TNA, SC 2/215/32.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup>Willis-Bund (ed.), *The Black Book*, pp. 243–5.

# The Townswomen of Wales: Singlewomen, Work and Service, c.1300–c.1550

1

## Deborah Youngs

An examination of the role of women is essential to any study of the social and economic development of medieval towns. This was the indisputable outcome of the pioneering work of Annie Abram and Marion Dale, and the detailed case studies produced in the 1980s and 1990s, which presented full evaluations of the contribution of female labour to the pre-modern English economy.<sup>2</sup> As a result, women's work opportunities, wages, access to capital and their relation to power fed into debates of mercantile growth and the sustainability of England's urban population. The same cannot be said of research into Wales's towns. For much of the twentieth century the working lives of medieval Welsh women were ignored, and only since 2000 has research into the townswomen of medieval Wales begun in earnest.<sup>3</sup> In many ways – to echo Katherine Swett's thoughts written well over a decade ago – it still remains to be determined whether the lives and experience of pre-modern Welsh women differed from or ran parallel to the lives of their female neighbours in England.<sup>4</sup>

It is worth considering why this is so. One reason for the neglect has been historiographical: the social history of medieval Wales has not generated the same interest as the country's political development. Another is the range and quality of surviving documentation. Research into the activities of medieval townswomen across Europe is typically hampered by the source material which can be frustratingly fragmentary, laconic and amorphous in turn. But it is particularly challenging for Wales where there is a heavy bias towards administrative organizations (royal and seigniorial lords) and a lack or entire absence of the type of documentation that has yielded important results for historians of England's townswomen.<sup>5</sup> There are no poll tax records or anything closely equivalent; and there is little in the way of town and guild ordinances. While P. J. P. Goldberg was able to use over 600 wills for his study of working women in late medieval York, historians of Wales have only around two dozen women's wills for the whole of Wales (urban and rural) from the entire period up to 1540.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, ecclesiastical records are thin on the ground, and there is only the consistory court of Hereford diocese, which extended into parts of the southern and middle Marches of Wales, that offers material.<sup>7</sup>

If there is a dearth on the one hand, on the other it would be wrong to give

the impression that townswomen hardly appear in medieval Welsh sources. Numerous women inhabit borough charters, local and central government judicial records, land deeds and town rentals. The problem is that these rarely overlap in place or time sufficiently to facilitate detailed case studies. It can make for a recovery process at best, producing long lists of unidentifiable names. There is also a distinct unevenness in coverage with some areas – notably the north-east March – more richly resourced than others. Of particular importance is the extraordinary survival of a continuous series of court rolls from the lordship of Dyffryn Clwyd (which covers the town of Ruthin) for 1294–1654.<sup>8</sup> Its sheer size, however, has not easily encouraged research, and it is only recently, notably in the work of Matthew Stevens, that the material has been treated to rigorous analysis in relation to women.<sup>9</sup> It is worth bearing in mind, therefore, that the medieval historian of Wales's women has to negotiate between the anecdotal and the large data set.

There is much basic research still to be done, but the real challenge is moving the analysis forward to a point where patterns emerge, and hypotheses and generalizations can be made and tested. The rewards will be beneficial not only for the social history of urban Wales, but also as an important case study into the regional experiences of medieval women. Studies on the continued use of traditional Welsh law and Marcher law in rural areas of late medieval Wales have already shown interesting differences between women's experiences under Welsh and English law, particularly in relation to social identities, inheritance practices and spousal violence.<sup>10</sup> While English common law had been introduced into Wales's towns, the use of Welsh law can occasionally be detected.<sup>11</sup> Gendered though it was, therefore, women's lives were also governed by a myriad other factors: by property rights, local custom, access to capital, age and their life-cycle stage. Llinos B. Smith and Matthew

Stevens have both drawn attention to the importance of marriage – and through it access to capital – as the essential factor controlling female market participation.<sup>12</sup> It is on the issue of the 'life cycle' that this chapter will focus. The intention is to evaluate the evidence on Welsh townswomen with particular emphasis on the opportunities available for non-married women who were born and/or resident in Welsh towns during the late medieval and early Tudor periods. The lack of age data means we can never know how youthful these single women were, but we may come to know how far and how long they experienced a social adolescence.

One unequivocal message to arise from the sources is that women, throughout their lives, were of vital importance to the late-medieval economy of Wales. Like other pre-capitalist economies, production was based largely in the household and the typical unit of production was the workshop.<sup>13</sup> As members of the household, women contributed to the organization, production and sale of a variety of goods, although this domestic labour – as wives, daughters, sisters – went largely unrecorded. The household also provided an informal

training unit as daughters took on tasks where necessary and worked alongside their mothers, learning their skills and trades. For girls, therefore, the transition from domestic work in childhood to the world of work may have been, in the words of Michael Roberts, 'quite seamless'.<sup>14</sup>

Once in formal employment, they emerge more fully in the written records. Women are a notable presence in borough court rolls, appearing as sellers and purchasers in their own right, revealing that much of the market trade was in their hands.<sup>15</sup> The small series of rolls for the north Wales town of Caernarfon, for example, are full of female producers and purchasers, plaintiffs and defendants. Over forty parchment rolls survive from the courts of piepowder, fairs, town and Great Tourn, and their overlapping dates cover broadly the periods 1361–78, 1393–7, 1401–2.<sup>16</sup> For the period 1361–78, around 190 women appeared at the courts and provide insight into trading activities. The pleas of debt brought by women suggest that there was a significant amount of independent economic activity, and in the vast majority of cases the women acted on their own behalf regardless of whether they were single, married or widowed. Of the 190, fifty-four are described by the phrase 'X, wife of Y', of which 37 (69 per cent) appear on their own, even though their husbands were still alive. Most cases involved interpersonal violence, but there are examples of wives being prosecuted for withholding money, taking away corn, selling ale outside the walls and selling underweight bread.<sup>17</sup> It would be useful to know how many of the 190 were non-married women. In English sources, it has been assumed that those described as 'daughter of ' were single women. Unfortunately for historical analysis, the Welsh use of the patronymic 'ferch' (daughter of ) slightly undermines this assumption because it is not uncommon to find married women and widows who retained the patronymic in their names. Nevertheless, set against those specifically described as wife or widow, sixty-five women (the largest proportion) are described in terms of being the 'daughter of ' and this group must have included a substantial number of non-married women.

Another forceful message is that these women were engaged in a diverse range of occupations. It might be assumed that the comparatively smaller towns of Wales presented more limited options than neighbouring towns in England, an assumption that has been mooted in relation to early modern Welsh women.<sup>18</sup> Yet recent research on medieval Welsh towns is increasingly showing them to be flourishing urban and commercial centres during the later Middle Ages, which provided growing and varied employment. Over forty different trades were practised in the most important southern town of Haverfordwest during the early sixteenth century.<sup>19</sup> Women shared these opportunities to some extent. In the early fourteenth century, four women appear as hod and mortar carriers at Caernarfon Castle. Elsewhere they can be found as spinners, weavers and fullers.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, the most common trades open to them were the classically feminine ventures of victualling and brewing,

ones that required little prior training. A significant proportion engaged in baking, with women forming between 20 and 40 per cent of bakers in early-fourteenth-century Ruthin.<sup>21</sup>

Far more were involved in brewing. Studies of England's towns – including those on the Marches of Wales – have shown brewing to be an activity particularly dominated by women with large numbers brewing in order to supplement their family's income.<sup>22</sup> This appears to be the case in Wales too where the assize of ale operated in several Welsh jurisdictions from the late thirteenth century. In many cases, particularly for southern areas, we are limited to very brief glimpses. In west Wales, the chamberlain's accounts of the vill of Trefilan, 1303–5, show that 8s.4d. came from a custom on ale and mead called 'tolester', which was paid by ale-wives.<sup>23</sup> In the south-east, Chepstow's assizes in 1415 and its custom book of 1535–6 provide a handful of cases.<sup>24</sup> More substantial evidence comes from northern towns where the assizes provide fruitful material.<sup>25</sup> In fourteenth-century Ruthin, women dominated those breaching the community's assize of ale, with the numbers pointing to women brewing five times as often as men.<sup>26</sup> Female brewers are also regularly seen in late-fourteenth-century Caernarfon. They include the tavern owner, Agnes Le Souster, who in March 1365 was hauled before the Great Tourn. While keeping a tavern for Robert de Parys, a prominent burgess of the town, she had decided to make additional money by selling her own goods alongside those of her employer; she was amerced 2s. As a tavern-keeper, Agnes must have been a familiar face in Caernarfon and she was certainly known to the local bailiffs. She was amerced several times during the 1360s: for debts, for detaining goods, for falsely raising a hue and cry, for making false claims and for assaulting and causing bloodshed on a number of women. That she was probably a widow is suggested by the existence of her daughter, Isabel, who was also no stranger to the courts, although largely as the victim or perpetrator of assaults. Among those 'daughters' accused of brewing contrary to the regulation and prejudice of Caernarfon in 1377–8 were Angharad ferch Dafydd ap Madog Goch and Gwenllïan ferch Gwilym ap Madog. Others took out actions themselves, such as Gwenllïan ferch Milir who brought a case against Ithel ap Dafydd ab Einion who had lost a costrel of her ale worth 8d.<sup>27</sup>

Women of all ages and marital statuses engaged in these trades. Yet what the evidence gleaned so far demonstrates is that, like towns in England, most of the major brewsters were wives. Maiden brewers were unlikely to become brewers in their own right, and usually brewed only occasionally and on a small scale.<sup>28</sup> For non-married women, earning money in any way that required significant outlay was clearly difficult. Gwenllïan ferch Ieuan Gule, for instance, was in debt for 16s. on account of malt bought of John le Spicer at Caernarvon.<sup>29</sup> As a result, brewing was the preferred commercial activity of the wealthy women who had access to significant capital; in Ruthin, it was they rather than the unmarried or widowed who dominated trade.<sup>30</sup> Occasionally, being single



could be an advantage. Three out of four of Ruthin's most active bakers were single: married women and mothers had other timeconsuming domestic obligations and childcare to perform and are unlikely to have been able to specialize.<sup>31</sup> Despite being economically active, however, independent female bakers also had difficulty in maintaining the capital necessary to sustain prolonged trade participation. Instead, historians are more likely to find unmarried women, those with little or no investment capital, at the menial end of the retail industry, often as forestallers.<sup>32</sup> Although they had the power to act on their own behalf in borough and common law courts, their appearances as petty debtors underlines their problems in accessing capital. In Caernarfon, woollen and linen yarn seems a favoured choice among those stealing or failing to pay for goods (presumably an indication of piecework).<sup>33</sup> In other words, the evidence so far from Wales confirms the picture elsewhere that work for single women brought little prestige or financial comfort.<sup>34</sup>

As Goldberg reminds us, the problem was that 'women's entry into employment was constrained by their limited access to training, wealth and citizenship in its widest sense'.<sup>35</sup> For some, informal training could have been gained through service. Live-in service was a significant occupation for women in towns. It was the most common employment for young women migrating to London, and studies of other English towns indicate their integral role in late-medieval urban society.<sup>36</sup> The impression has sometimes been given that service was less common in Wales than in England, with fewer opportunities to use it to amass the resources for marriage.<sup>37</sup> The issue is not so much the numbers of servants – which appear high – but the uncertainty over whether these girls were resident in the houses of others or if, as Llinos Smith argues, families 'preferred to cherish their unmarried daughters at home'. The use of foster children as housemaids has also clouded the issue.<sup>38</sup> Again, we are to some extent at the mercy of the evidence. Even in the comparatively extensive court records of Ruthin, servants are, in the words of Matthew Stevens, 'well-nigh invisible'.<sup>39</sup>

Glimpses of the world of servants can be found in the court rolls of Caernarfon, a town which enjoyed a period of growth in the fourteenth century.<sup>40</sup> During the years covered by the rolls, at least twenty-six female servants are listed along with two nurses.<sup>41</sup> As in many English records, most are recorded by their first names only, indicative of their lowly status.<sup>42</sup> The exceptions were daughters of craftsmen: Gwenllian, the daughter of Goronwy Goch, a tailor ('souter'); and Agnes, the daughter of James Glouer, one of several glovers in the town who served the jury.<sup>43</sup> The majority – nineteen – have Welsh names, thirteen of whom were servants of English burgesses. There is a strong possibility that some migrated from the surrounding countryside, which is a common characteristic of servants noted elsewhere.<sup>44</sup> They appeared in court on various charges, although rarely in a way that offers a full insight of their domestic or trading tasks. The entry that Tannow, servant of Richard de

Pikemere (a bailiff of Caernarfon) was charged with selling ale by false measure in 1375 is a lone example.<sup>45</sup>

Little is known of the contractual arrangements made between servant and master. Brief insights can occasionally be seen where the contract had been breached because the servant left before her term had completed. Three cases in Caernarfon offer specific dates:

Tangwystl, servant of Hugh de Chedle, amerced for breach of contract made with Roger le Fletcher, and to satisfy him concerning service according to the time from Feast of St John before the Latin gate (6th May) to feast of St Peter in chains (1st August) 1362.

Dafydd Chwirth versus Gwenllian ferch Goronwy Goch for breach of contract, namely that she agreed to serve him from Saints Philip and James's day (1 May) to All Hallows following (1 November) 1372, but left his service within that term, contrary to the statute.

William de Hunton versus Agnes, daughter of James Glouer in an action of breach of contract. Agnes had agreed to serve him from 4th October 1395 to Easter following, but she left his services on 6th December 1395 to his damage 2s.<sup>46</sup>

All three were short-term contracts, arranged as and when needed: none use the standard English quarter days of Martinmas or St John the Baptist as witnessed in York.<sup>47</sup> It is likely that these shorter contracts were more susceptible to breach. Such informal work patterns fit the general picture of short-term, casual work of women.<sup>48</sup> But there is at least the suggestion that these women were making decisions, whether because they found conditions intolerable and/or had found better offers elsewhere. This is perhaps a hint that the general depopulation of the late fourteenth century had made servants hard to find and to keep: the case of Gwenllian ferch Goronwy Goch went explicitly against the Statute of Labourers legislation, which aimed to prevent employees exercising the power of choice.<sup>49</sup> Comparable examples can be found in Ruthin in the 1390s where employers attempted to retain servants keen to move elsewhere. In 1394 John Samon accused his ex-servant Katherine of a broken covenant on the grounds that she had agreed to a year contract for 8s., but had withdrawn without permission. Katherine's defence that she had only agreed to serve for a quarter of a year was upheld and Samon convicted of making a false claim.<sup>50</sup>

The quality of life experienced by servants is likely to have varied at an individual level, and across time. For the young, it was a position that offered some security, bed and board, especially at times of surplus labour; but it could also lead to cases of exploitation and abuse.<sup>51</sup> Too little is yet known of servants in Wales, but the available evidence points to a similarly mixed picture. Testamentary data are useful in indicating that some household servants benefited from modest bequests – usually in goods or animals – left by their

employers. Thomas Lychfyld, alderman of Cardiff (d.1541), bequeathed money to his servants including 10s. to Jane ferch David and 6s.8d. to each of his maidservants. Edward Thomas (d.1545), a saddler who wanted to be buried in Monkton (Pembrokeshire), shows a typical gender division: he left to his servant William 'all my stuff in my shop in Pembrokeshire', and bequeathed all of his wife's clothing to his two servants, Alice Morgan and Agnes; clothes appear to be a favoured bequest to servants.<sup>52</sup> On the other hand, cases in the Caernarfon court rolls do provide examples of broken trust and violence. Cyssele, for example, accused her former employer, Richard Newhall, of wrongfully detaining her chattels. Other cases involved violence: John de Stanmere assaulted his servant, Kyneris; Roger le Fletcher assaulted his servant, Iwerydd; and Margaret 'W' made an assault with bloodshed upon her servant, Efa Du.<sup>53</sup> While indicating the negative side of the relationship, this case also shows that assault with bloodshed went beyond the acceptable degree of discipline that an employer might exercise on his or her servant. These servants had use of the courts and some of their other appearances indicate that they also had independent possessions.<sup>54</sup> Efa Du features several times and may have been a more established servant (if we can assume some significance from the use of a surname). A year before she was employed by Margaret, she was sued and not found liable of a breach of contract by William de Housom, which presumably related to service. She successfully sued another servant for withholding a handkerchief belonging to her. On another occasion, she was found withholding a piece of ironwork, valued 3d., due to Adam Laban. She was also more than capable of physically defending herself: in 1372, Efa insulted and beat Ieuan Goch, to his damage 12d., and three years later she was found guilty of assaulting Cecilia de Housom.<sup>55</sup> In none of these cases is she described as a servant of anyone, having a clear identity of her own.

As servants, these women were without the means to support their own household. Although they would have learnt trade and monetary skills that could aid any bid for economic self-sufficiency, there is little to suggest that they accumulated enough to achieve that aim. In the opinion of Stevens, it is very likely that these young women left service with no more material wealth than that which they began – they needed marriage as a way to combine forces to generate resources.<sup>56</sup> Some hint of this comes in the occasions where earnings were supplemented through nefarious acts. In Caernarfon in 1368, three women, two of whom were identified as servants, were accused of stealing honey, flour and wool belonging to their employers. They were organized by Johanna, wife of Hugh de Bechynton, who was charged with receiving stolen goods and selling them on. Servants were perhaps suitably placed for such illegal business ventures.<sup>57</sup>

Did daughters born to wealthier townspeople have more opportunities for formal skills training? There are no examples of young women being left the tools of trades, or of money left to advance their education, which can be seen

in a few cases with male relations.<sup>58</sup> Throughout medieval Europe, there were trades and skilled crafts that were only accessible through long periods of training or apprenticeships. Because men dominated these occupations, so too did they comprise the majority of apprentices. Studies in England and Europe have all underlined the low numbers of female apprenticeships.<sup>59</sup> Those that existed differed from male apprenticeships largely in terms of the main trades and correspondingly the age of entry, prior education and length of apprenticeship. What remained a constant was the contractual relationship that bound the young boy or girl to a master and/or mistress for a set period of time. In return for a fee, the master would offer the apprentice formal training along with full bed and board.

Apprenticeship in Wales during the medieval and early-modern periods remains largely unexplored and, to date, the most promising sources relate to those Welsh boys and girls who took apprenticeships outside of Wales. The best studied is the city of Bristol, which had the largest number of Welsh residents of any English town.<sup>60</sup> The regular contact between traders of Wales and Bristol, the contribution of Welshmen to Bristol's economy, and the identity of the Bristol Welsh have all been subjected to meticulous examination.<sup>61</sup> The role of Welsh women has been less so, but limited evidence from the sixteenth century does show a familiarity and vested interest in the city's economy. The ledger book of Bristol merchant John Smythe indicates the extent to which Welsh businessmen relied on their wives to deliver money or goods. Several women from towns in south Wales travelled to Bristol to pay Smythe – or more often his wife – outstanding debts. They include Alice Watkin, the wife of Edward Jones of Abergavenny, and the wives of Humfrey Beare of Chepstow, John Cole of Tenby, David Americk of Cardiff, David Watkins of Cardiff and Thomas David of Usk. Widows continued to make these household payments following their husbands' decease, as was the case with Alice, the late wife of Thomas ap Jenkin.<sup>62</sup> Through inheritance, property and land in Bristol could also be in the hands of Welsh women. Alice Phipps (alias Morgan) of Caerleon (Monmouthshire), widow, composed her will in February 1565/6. Among her numerous bequests were those involving the rents and profits of Bristol property in Christmas Street and Horse Street.<sup>63</sup>

The city was also home to single Welsh women. Female apprentices were a visible minority in Bristol throughout the sixteenth century (and indeed in earlier centuries too).<sup>64</sup> They feature in the first recorded apprenticeships of the city in the 1530s, and I. K. Ben-Amos has calculated that just over 3 per cent of the 1,500 apprentices enrolled between 1542 and 1552 were young women. Among them was a significant proportion from Wales, which was the case with all Bristol's apprenticeships. Spencer Dimmock has recently counted 483 Welsh apprentices taken on by Bristol masters between 1532 and 1552, or around 15 per cent of all apprentices in Bristol. Of these, at least nineteen (4.1 per cent) were girls.<sup>65</sup> Their counties of origin show a similar pattern to those of male

Welsh apprentices, a distribution dominated by the southern counties: twelve came from Monmouthshire, four from Glamorgan, two from Pembrokeshire and one from Carmarthenshire. The places of origin include the towns of Cardiff, Newport, Pembroke and Swansea, as well as a number of coastal villages. Proximity was evidently important, as was familiarity. In 1540, the wife of John Cole of Tenby visited Bristol to pay a debt with a neckerchief cloth. Cole was a prominent burgess and mayor in Tenby, and it is possible to identify him and his wife as the parents of Dorothy, daughter of John Cole of Tenby, tucker, who began her apprenticeship in Bristol in 1547. It may well have been while visiting Bristol that Mrs Cole met with potential employees of her daughter.<sup>66</sup> A 'Welsh network' may also have assisted the placement of the young. None of the households which apprenticed Welsh girls looked to one geographical area for recruits; their apprentices came from several different locations in England, Wales and Ireland. Nevertheless, at least eight of the households were headed by men or women with Welsh surnames (such as Appowel, Davies, Cogan, Griffith, Jones and Merrick).<sup>67</sup> This is also the case where a third party was used to 'broker' a deal. Dimmock's observation that men who had previously migrated to Bristol were helping boys living in Wales move to the city, particularly if their fathers had died, can also be applied to female apprentices in cases where third parties were used.<sup>68</sup> This is distinctly possible in the case of Johanna Roberts, daughter of Robert Redyn of Cardiff, tanner, who was indentured by Robert Jones of Bristol, tailor, to Nicholas Shey, soapmaker, and Lettice his wife.<sup>69</sup>

Apprenticeships in general were the preserve of the 'middling sort', and Bristol was an attractive destination for Welsh families with social mobility, or at least stability, in mind. For eighteen female apprentices whose fathers' occupations are known (1532–52), nine (or 50 per cent) were from gentry and yeomanry backgrounds, a notably high percentage: while the daughters of gentlemen and yeomen were 'relatively prominent', they only amounted to 17.2 per cent of all women apprenticed in Bristol in the period 1532–52.<sup>70</sup> This contrasts too with the trade-dominated parents of Welsh male apprentices. One likely reason for these figures relates to the trades into which the girls were apprenticed. For the period 1532–44, the ten cases which mention the apprenticed trades show a marked and equal preference for 'huswifeships' (5) and shepsters or seamstresses (5). These were the two most common trades among all female apprentices in Bristol, and again show the emphasis on traditional feminine tasks and domesticity noted above.<sup>71</sup> The apprenticeship for housewifery, in particular, was intended to train girls in the skills necessary for domestic service. While they were bound to both master and mistress, they would have been trained by the latter. The households to which the girls were apprenticed were a diverse mix, including innkeepers, brewers, grocers and glovers. Lengthy service was not unusual. Most of the Welsh contracts were for seven years (as was common in the rest of England), while terms of eight, nine

and ten years also appear.<sup>72</sup> They had far more permanency than service, although how much this became simply a form of long-term, cheap residential labour is unknown.<sup>73</sup> What can be said is that these roles would not have given the women the status or the income which their male counterparts would eventually enjoy. While an apprenticeship was a means to prepare girls to generate a good income as an adult, it seems unlikely to have trained them for independent careers. Rather it provided them with skills that would enable them to take over future husbands' work while they were away or after their deaths. In other words, it trained them to become married to craftsmen and therefore more attractive in the marriage market.<sup>74</sup>

Bristol was not the only city to which Welsh families turned to prepare young girls for good marriages to wealthy merchants. W. P. Griffith's analysis of wives and widows of Welsh origin in sixteenth-century London concluded that the city was a place for women 'to find some independence or to find a husband'.<sup>75</sup> It is likely that, as young women, they were engaged in some form of genteel service at the time they met their future husbands. One success story was Philip Gunter, a wealthy skinner originally from Llanmihangel Dyffryn Wysg (Monmouthshire) who successfully married his daughters to Londoners who were all freemen of respected trades: two grocers, one cloth-worker and one skinner.<sup>76</sup> Others went to London as widows. Thomas Lychfyld, alderman of the town of Cardiff (d.1541), bequeathed his house in Cardiff to his wife 'as long as she dwells within the town of Cardyfe'; if she married and left the town, the house was to go to his son and heir. Thomas clearly knew his wife because Jane Lychfyld wrote her will only two years later, having married Thomas Knott of London, gentleman, to whom she left the leases of Cardiff lands and houses she had had received from her first husband.<sup>77</sup> Was Lychfyld part of a social group where widows commonly remarried in different cities, or had Jane no other ties in Cardiff and was she herself a migrant to the town? One wonders whether Welsh towns proved a draw not just for women from within the country, but also without its borders. It is worth noting that few apprentices in Bristol – boys or girls – came from Carmarthenshire, which is surprising given that the bonds between the town of Carmarthen and Bristol were strong throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.<sup>78</sup> It may be, as Dimmock suggests, that this 'historical capital of the royal principality in the south . . . provided enough attraction for its own ambitious youth'.<sup>79</sup> Whether Welsh towns were indeed providing important training (and marriage) opportunities for the young is a question that warrants further research.

Taken together – the menial work and the lack of formal, occupational training – there is little evidence that non-married women were ever in a position to accumulate significant funds through their own work. Few appear to have been able to purchase property or establish their own business. In Ruthin, young women rarely acquired property and often had to sell it to alleviate poverty.<sup>80</sup> It was mainly through the fortunes of inheritance that single women

obtained land, although inheritance customs always placed women at a disadvantage. Surviving wills show a common division of provision among sons and daughters: whereas sons were left land and property, daughters were more likely to be left household goods. Margaret ferch David (1540), widow of John ap Llywelyn, a burgess of Welshpool, left her house and the family shop to two males (relation not explained), while her daughter, Anne, was given a gown and household stuff.<sup>81</sup> William Gunter, burgess of Caerleon (1542), stipulated that his male heir was to have a house he had bought in Caerleon town, along with other parcels of land. He was less sure what to do for his daughters and empowered his wife, as executor, to use the residue of his goods to their benefit.<sup>82</sup> Those who took more care to stipulate appear to have had an eye on their daughters' marriage preparations, not surprising given what is known of female apprenticeships. Agnes Wyte (1481), widow of a Newport burgess, left her daughters several household items such as pots, pans, plates, sheets and napkins.<sup>83</sup>

Nevertheless, daughters do feature in some wills as recipients of lands, from both fathers and mothers. An interesting example is that of John Gwyn, a blacksmith and burgess of Newport who died in 1471. He left the tenement in which he lived to his wife, Margaret, for the rest of her life. Afterwards, the tenement was to be divided between his son, William, who received the front half with the shop (and also his father's anvil), while his daughter, Joan, was given the rear half and garden. Each was to have the right of access through the front door and without interference from one another.<sup>84</sup> Agnes Velivel, widow (1542), left to her daughters – and executors of her will – all her lands and tenements 'within the liberties of the town of Bewmares as without the liberties within the countie of Anglesey'. She further left land and a tenement to her niece, Alice Gruffudd daughter of Edmund Gruffudd, who was also one of the witnesses to the will.<sup>85</sup>

That women did inherit land and tenements in Welsh towns can be seen in chance surviving rentals, surveys and subsidy accounts that offer snapshots of landholding throughout the late Middle Ages and Tudor period. The extent made of the lands of the bishop of St Davids in 1326 contains many examples of female burgage holders dotted across the account. In the small and short-lived town of Llawhaden, Pembrokeshire, 127 burgage holders were recorded of which 18 were women (plus a further two listed with their husbands), which gives a relatively high percentage of 14–15 per cent. Johanna Mosselwyk, with four burgages and 15½ acres, had one of the largest holdings. Unfortunately, the marital status in most cases is unclear, but there are a number listed as daughters. In Langadog, for example, female burgesses listed there are Angharad, daughter of Llewelyn, Wenllian, daughter of Eynon, Nesta, daughter of Walter and Wladus, daughter of Cadog.<sup>86</sup>

Where they survive in large numbers, land deeds can offer a more dynamic picture. Something of women's activity in the land market can be seen in the



collection of land deeds for the town of Haverfordwest (late-thirteenth century to 1550), which now survive in the Pembrokeshire Record Office.<sup>87</sup> Of 460 deeds, around 15 per cent (70) were either granted to or by women, acting in their own capacities. By far the majority of these were widows (64 per cent), who dominate the number who granted land (76 per cent). This preponderance of widows is a known feature of the land market in English towns. In London in the period 1300–1474, widows formed the largest group of women who sold property, constituting around 6–8 per cent of all transactions that were recorded in the Husting court deeds. Figures for single women were much lower, and in the fifteenth century they averaged only a little over 1 per cent of sellers.<sup>88</sup> A similar disparity in the granting of land can be found in Haverfordwest, where there were only three cases of daughters granting lands, although twelve (17 per cent of the 70) received lands, often from a parent or sibling. In other words, non-married women were undoubtedly granted land, but at 3 per cent of the total land transactions, they clearly were not major players.

Drawing these pieces of evidence together, what can be said thus far about the lives of non-married women in late medieval Welsh towns? Did this period of social adolescence bring public opportunity? The evidence suggests that for the daughters of well-to-do burgess families, their main economic function was to marry men with their own businesses, and/or provide the means by which new businesses and property empires could commence. Many would have been trained in their native households; for others, the clear hope was that, in sending them away, they would make themselves into more attractive marriage partners. For young girls lower down the social scale, there was a range of available work, but usually of the more menial kind, which rarely led to successful independent careers in trade. Whatever their biological age, many unmarried women would therefore have remained in a stage of social adolescence: unable to develop their own households.

Undoubtedly the picture was not static and it altered with the changing economic climate of late-medieval Britain. Both Stevens and Smith have argued that periods of labour shortage in the fourteenth century during the years of famine and following the Black Death served to draw more Welsh women into remunerative employment.<sup>89</sup> The admittedly small number of cases of servants breaking contracts in Caernarfon may point to a larger growth in decision-making towards the end of that century. But no systematic research of urban or rural women in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries has been undertaken, and the extent to which economic changes served to benefit non-married women demands further enquiry. Nevertheless, while their financial prospects do not appear rosy and the records suggest a life of struggle, the non-married (maiden and widowed) women of Welsh towns cannot be characterized as weak and feeble. They give the impression that they were more than capable of looking after themselves. It must have been a brave man of Caernarfon who

confronted Gwenllïan ferch Dafydd ap Madog for, in 1396, she struck Dafydd ap Tegwared Goch on the head with a staff. It took three summonses to get her to appear in Caernarfon town court to face the charge. In the same year, two other men brought cases of debt against Gwenllïan (where she similarly failed to appear at court), but they subsequently dropped their cases.<sup>90</sup> A victim? A survivor? Or a canny trader? The complex lives of women in urban Wales are slowly being revealed.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>I wish to extend my thanks to Dr Llinos Beverley Smith and to the anonymous reader for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.

<sup>2</sup>For example, Annie Abram, 'Women traders in medieval London', *Economic Journal*, 26 (1916), 276–85; Marion K. Dale, 'The London silkwomen of the fifteenth century', *Economic History Review*, 4 (1933), 324–35; and see the historiographical comments in P. J. P. Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle in a Medieval Economy: Women in York and Yorkshire, c.1300–1520* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 3–20. Caroline M. Barron, "'The Golden Age" of women in medieval London', *Reading Medieval Studies*, 15 (1989), 35–58.

<sup>3</sup>For increasing voices noting the lacunae, see, for example, Philip Jenkins, *A History of Modern Wales, 1536–1990* (Longman, 1992), p. 429; Michael Roberts and Simone Clarke (eds), *Women and Gender in Early Modern Wales* (Cardiff, 2000), p. 2. As recently as 2007, Emma Cavell drew attention to 'the near complete neglect . . . of the topic of women on the Welsh frontier': see 'Aristocratic widows and the medieval Welsh frontier: the Shropshire evidence', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 17 (2007), p. 59. For an early exception, see Dafydd Jenkins and Morfydd E. Owen (eds), *The Welsh Law of Women* (Cardiff, 1980). The first attempt at uncovering women's work in late medieval Wales was Llinos Beverley Smith, 'Towards a history of women in late medieval Wales', in Roberts and Clarke (eds), *Women and Gender*, pp. 14–49. A major study on townspeople in Wales, which includes substantial chapters on women, is Matthew Stevens, *Urban Assimilation in Post-Conquest Wales: Ethnicity, Gender and Economy in Ruthin, 1282–1348* (Cardiff, 2010). My great debt to these works and historians will become clear during this essay.

<sup>4</sup>Katherine Swett, 'Widowhood, custom and property in early modern North Wales', *Welsh History Review*, 18 (1995), 189.

<sup>5</sup>For a discussion on the sources for Welsh towns see Ralph A. Griffiths (ed.), *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales* (Cardiff, 1978), pp. 5–7. See too the comments by Llinos B. Smith, 'Towards a history of women', p. 30.

<sup>6</sup>Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle*, p. 26, and note the comment by Helen Jewell that for England the 'wills of urban women are plentiful and informative'. See Helen Jewell, *Women in Medieval England* (Manchester, 1996), p. 86. For medieval Welsh wills, see the indispensable Helen Chandler, 'The will

in medieval Wales to 1540' (unpublished MPhil thesis, University of Wales, 1991).

<sup>7</sup>See the work of Llinos B. Smith, 'Towards a history of women', n. 63 and n. 80.

<sup>8</sup>For information on the rolls and a list of publications generated by the data, see A. D. M. Barrell, R. R. Davies, O. J. Padel and Ll. B. Smith, 'The Dyffryn Clwyd Court Roll Project, 1340–52 and 1389–99: a methodology and some preliminary findings', in Zvi Razi and Richard Smith (eds), *Medieval Society and the Manor Court* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 260–97. A small number of court rolls has also survived from the Marcher lordships of Bromfield and Yale, Caus and Clun. Virtually nothing survives of the court rolls from south Wales.

<sup>9</sup>Smith, 'Towards a history of women', p. 14; Stevens, *Urban Assimilation*.

<sup>10</sup>R. R. Davies, 'The status of women and the practice of marriage in late-medieval Wales', in Jenkins and Owen (eds), *The Welsh Law of Women*, p. 98; Nerys Patterson, 'Wife as vassal: gender symmetry in medieval Wales', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 8 (1988), 31–45; Lizabeth Johnson, 'Attitudes towards spousal violence in medieval Wales', *Welsh History Review*, 27 (2009), 81–115.

<sup>11</sup>For the use of the Welsh mortgage *tir prid* in the towns of Rhuddlan, Conwy and Oswestry, among others, see Llinos Beverley Smith, 'The gage and the land market in late medieval Wales', *Economic History Review*, 29, 4 (1976), p. 547.

<sup>12</sup>Smith, 'Towards a history of women', p. 38; Stevens, *Urban Assimilation*, part 2.

<sup>13</sup>For example, Martha C. Howell, *Women, Production and Patriarchy in Late Medieval Cities* (Chicago, 1986), chap. 1.

<sup>14</sup>Michael Roberts, 'Gender, work and socialization in Wales c.1450–c.1850', in Sandra Betts (ed.), *Our Daughters' Land: Past and Present* (Cardiff, 1996), pp. 29–30.

<sup>15</sup>A. D. Carr, 'Wales: economy and society', in S. H. Rigby (ed.), *A Companion to Britain in the Later Middle Ages* (Malden, MA, 2003), p. 129; Stevens, *Urban Assimilation*, p. 124.

<sup>16</sup>Printed transcripts of thirty-nine rolls can be found in G. P. Jones and H. Owen (eds), *Caernarvon Court Rolls, 1361–1402* (Caernarfon, 1951). In addition, court records for 1392–3, not available to Jones and Owen, can be found in NLW, Arthur Ivor Pryce, 1413–17.

<sup>17</sup>*Caernarvon Court Rolls*, pp. 36, 59, 60, 83, 103. For comparison see Stevens, *Urban Assimilation*, p. 127.

<sup>18</sup>Christine Peters, *Women in Early Modern Britain, 1450–1640* (Basingstoke, 2004), pp. 3, 46.

<sup>19</sup>Spencer Dimmock, 'Haverfordwest: an exemplar for the study of southern

Welsh towns in the later Middle Ages', *Welsh History Review*, 22 (2004), p. 20.

<sup>20</sup>Carr, 'Wales: economy and society', p. 130; Smith, 'Towards a history of women', pp. 32–3; R. Ian Jack, 'The cloth industry in medieval Wales', *Welsh History Review*, 10 (1980–1), p. 454.

<sup>21</sup>Stevens, *Urban Assimilation*, p. 158.

<sup>22</sup>Judith M. Bennett, *Ale, Beer and Brewsters in England: Women's Work in a Changing World, 1300–1600* (New York, 1996); Mavis Mate, *Women in Medieval English Society* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 38–9; Jane Laughton, 'The alewives of later medieval Chester', in Rowena E. Archer (ed.), *Crown, Government and People in the Fifteenth Century* (Stroud, 1995).

<sup>23</sup>Myvanwy Rhys (ed. and trans.), *Ministers' Accounts for West Wales, 1277 to 1306*, part 1 (London, 1936), pp. 313, 379.

<sup>24</sup>For example, Agnes Rodeley was accused of breaking the assize of ale in 1415: see T. B. Pugh (ed.), *The Marcher Lordships of South Wales, 1415–1536: Selected Documents* (Cardiff, 1963), p. 53. In the custom book the lists of prise for ale brewed in the town that year is dominated by men, but Margaret Hollyn, Agnes Grene and Alison Spencer appear: see Spencer Dimmock, 'The custom book of Chepstow, 1535–6', *Studia Celtica*, 38 (2004), 137–8.

<sup>25</sup>Stevens, *Urban Assimilation*; A. D. Carr, *Medieval Anglesey* (Llangefni, 1982), p. 107.

<sup>26</sup>Matthew F. Stevens, 'Women brewers in fourteenth-century Ruthin', *Transactions of the Denbighshire Historical Society*, 54 (2005/6), 18–19.

<sup>27</sup>*Caernarvon Court Rolls*, pp. 108, 113.

<sup>28</sup>Bennett, *Ale, Beer and Brewsters in England*, pp. 37–40.

<sup>29</sup>*Caernarvon Court Rolls*, p. 144.

<sup>30</sup>Stevens, 'Women brewers', pp. 18–19; idem., *Urban Assimilation*, pp. 140, 163.

<sup>31</sup>Stevens, *Urban Assimilation*, p. 170.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>33</sup>*Caernarvon Court Rolls*, pp. 107, 113, 119, 136.

<sup>34</sup>Kim Phillipps, *Medieval Maidens: Young Women and Gender in England, 1270–1540* (Manchester, 2003), p. 131.

<sup>35</sup>Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle*, p. 28.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, chap. 4; Barbara Hanawalt, *The Wealth of Wives: Women, Law and Economy in Late Medieval London* (Oxford/New York, 2007), p. 186.

<sup>37</sup>Peters, *Women in Early Modern Britain*, p. 46.

<sup>38</sup>Roberts, 'Gender, work and socialisation', p. 32; Smith, 'Towards a history of women', pp. 35, 38.

<sup>39</sup>Stevens, *Urban Assimilation*, p. 191.

<sup>40</sup>K. Williams-Jones, 'Caernarvon', in Griffiths (ed.), *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales*, p. 84.

<sup>41</sup>I have not included a further three who were amerced for breaches of contract. There is no explanation of what the arrangements were, although servants' contracts are highly likely, pp. 17, 69, 74. It is probable that other potential examples of female servants are hidden because the names of servants were not always recorded.

<sup>42</sup>Ann J. Kettle, 'Ruined maids: prostitutes and servant girls in later medieval England', in R. R. Edwards and V. Ziegler (eds), *Matrons and Marginal Women in Medieval Society* (Woodbridge, 1995), p. 20.

<sup>43</sup>*Caernarvon Court Rolls*, pp. 17, 31.

<sup>44</sup>Kettle, 'Ruined maids', p. 20.

<sup>45</sup>*Caernarvon Court Rolls*, p. 91.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 19, 76, 120. In addition, Agnes, servant of Laurence de Wynston, left her service before her term, p. 79. As mentioned in n. 41 above, it is unclear whether other breaches of contract also relate to service, pp. 17, 69, 74.

<sup>47</sup>Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle*, p. 173.

<sup>48</sup>For example, Jewell, *Women in Medieval England*, p. 93.

<sup>49</sup>Compare Hanawalt, *Wealth of Wives*, p. 190, and Diane Hutton, 'Women in fourteenth-century Shrewsbury', in Lindsey Charles and Lorna Duffin (eds), *Women and Work in Pre-Industrial England* (London, 1985), p. 91. Male servants in Caernarfon also broke contracts: see *Caernarvon Court Rolls*, p. 110.

<sup>50</sup>The National Archives (TNA), SC2/220/9, m.33.

<sup>51</sup>Cf. Marjorie K. McIntosh, *Working Women in English Society, 1300–1620* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 55; Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle*, p. 182.

<sup>52</sup>TNA, PROB 11/29, image ref. 137 (Lychfyld); PROB 11/30, image ref. 471 (Thomas). For other examples of servants receiving clothes, see the wills of Margaret ferch Dafydd (1540), widow of a burgess (NLW SA/BR/1), and Jane Lychfield's will where she left an old gown lined with russet worsted to Joan Plummer, 'a poor maid come out of the country': TNA PROB 11/31, image ref. 118.

<sup>53</sup>*Caernarvon Court Rolls*, pp. 64, 82, 173.

<sup>54</sup>Stevens, *Urban Assimilation*, p. 191.

<sup>55</sup>*Caernarvon Court Rolls*, pp. 63, 66, 69 and 92.

<sup>56</sup>Stevens, *Urban Assimilation*, pp. 203, 205.

<sup>57</sup>*Caernarvon Court Rolls*, p. 52. For cases at Ruthin, see Stevens, *Urban Assimilation*, p. 204.

<sup>58</sup>There is, however, the case of Symon Pasheley, a soapmaker of Bristol and Cardiff who left to his wife the 'ffurneyses vates and other stuffe perteynyng to

my crafte of sopemaker which I have within my wekhouse sett in Lewensmede' (Bristol). After her death, this was to be divided equally between his son John and daughter Kathryn: TNA PROB 11/17, image ref. 131.

<sup>59</sup>Deborah Youngs, *The Life Cycle in Western Europe, c.1300–c.1500* (Manchester, 2006), pp. 110–11; McIntosh, *Working Women*, pp. 133–9.

<sup>60</sup>Ralph A. Griffiths, 'After Glyndwr: an age of reconciliation', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 117 (2002), p. 152. Numerous men with Welsh patronymic names also took up apprentices in Shrewsbury during the sixteenth century. See the several pages of records for the late 1550s and 1560s contained in NLW, Castle Hill MS 2641.

<sup>61</sup>For example, Griffiths, 'After Glyndwr'; Peter Fleming, 'Identity and belonging: Irish and Welsh in fifteenth-century Bristol', in Linda Clark (ed.), *The Fifteenth Century, VII: Conflict, Consequences and the Crown in the Late Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2007), pp. 175–93.

<sup>62</sup>Jean Vanes (ed.), *The Ledger of John Smythe, 1538–1550* (Bristol Record Society, vol. 28, 1974), pp. 31, 36, 46, 65, 134 and 156; Spencer Dimmock, 'The origins of Welsh apprentices in sixteenth-century Bristol', *Welsh History Review*, 24 (2008–2009), 116–40, on p. 124.

<sup>63</sup>Judith Jones (ed.), *Monmouthshire Wills Proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, 1560–1601* (South Wales Record Society, vol. 12, 1997), no. 14.

<sup>64</sup>A few wills of Bristol women in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries refer to female apprentices: Peter Fleming, *Women in Late Medieval Bristol* (Bristol, 2001), p. 10.

<sup>65</sup>Data derive from: D. Hollis (ed.), *Calendar of the Bristol Apprentice Book: Part I, 1532–42* (Bristol Record Society, vol. 14, 1949); Elizabeth Ralph and Nora M. Hardwick (eds), *Calendar of the Bristol Apprentice Book, Part II. 1542–1552* (Bristol Record Society, vol. 33, 1980). See Dimmock, 'The origins of Welsh apprentices', and D. Youngs, '"For the preferment of their marriage and bringing upp in their youth": the education and training of young Welshwomen, c.1450– c.1550', *Welsh History Review*, 25 (2011), 463–85, on p. 474, although my figures for Welsh female apprentices differ slightly from those presented there.

<sup>66</sup>John Cole was mayor of Tenby in 1543: see H. F. Hore, 'Mayors and bailiffs of Tenby', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 4 (1853), p. 118. He was assessed on £40 worth of goods in the lay subsidy of 1543: Henry Owen (ed.), *A Calendar of the Public Records in Relation to Pembrokeshire* (London, 1911), vol. I, pp. 239, 242. Dorothy was apprenticed to William Butler, soapmaker, and his wife Alice for eight years: Ralph and Hardwick (eds), *Calendar of the Bristol Apprentice Book, Part II*, no. 907. Dimmock, 'The origins of Welsh apprentices', p. 124.

<sup>67</sup>It is possible that masters Richard Saunders and John Mattheuwe similarly had Welsh origins because both surnames are found regularly in south-east

Wales.

<sup>68</sup>Dimmock, 'The origins of Welsh apprentices', p.135.

<sup>69</sup>Hollis, *Calendar of the Bristol Apprentice Book*, Part I, p. 111.

<sup>70</sup>The fathers of Welsh female apprentices divide as follows: gentlemen (5), yeomen (4), husbandmen (2), glover (1), tailor (1), tanner (1), tucker (1), weaver (1), mariner (1) and chapman (1). Figures for all female apprentices 1532–1552 can be found in I. K. Ben-Amos, 'Women apprentices in the trades and crafts of early modern Bristol', *Continuity and Change*, 6 (1991), 227–52, on p. 230 and Table 2.

<sup>71</sup>Nearly three-quarters of ninety-eight female apprentices were to be brought up as housewives (41) or seamstresses and tailors (31): Ben-Amos, 'Women apprentices', p. 229.

<sup>72</sup>Hanawalt, *The Wealth of Wives*, p. 42. The breakdown for Welsh female apprentices in Bristol is: seven years (7), eight years (3), nine years (3) and ten years (2).

<sup>73</sup>As was witnessed towards the end of the century: McIntosh, *Working Women*, p. 41.

<sup>74</sup>Fleming, *Women in Late Medieval Bristol*, pp. 10–11; Hanawalt, *The Wealth of Wives*, p. 44.

<sup>75</sup>W. P. Griffiths, 'Tudor prelude', in Emrys Jones (ed.), *The Welsh in London, 1500–2000* (Cardiff, 2001), p. 14.

<sup>76</sup>Jones, *Monmouthshire Wills*, pp. 118–19.

<sup>77</sup>TNA, PROB 11/29, image ref. 137; PROB 11/31, image ref. 118.

<sup>78</sup>Ralph A Griffiths, 'Carmarthen', in Griffiths (ed.), *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales*, p. 153.

<sup>79</sup>Dimmock, 'The origins of Welsh apprentices', p. 121.

<sup>80</sup>Stevens, *Urban Assimilation*, p. 202.

<sup>81</sup>NLW, SA/BR/1, fo. 48v.

<sup>82</sup>TNA, PROB 11/29, image ref. 233.

<sup>83</sup>NLW, Tredegar 102/43.

<sup>84</sup>Michael Wilcox, 'The will of a Newport blacksmith, 1471', *Annual Report of the Glamorgan Archivist* (1986), 14–15.

<sup>85</sup>NLW, MS 1619E, p. 161. Further examples can be found in Chandler, 'The will in medieval Wales', p. 81.

<sup>86</sup>J. W. Willis-Bund (ed.), *The Black Book of St David's, in 1326* (London, 1902), p. 279.

<sup>87</sup>I have used *A Schedule of Haverfordwest Records*, compiled by B. G. Charles (National Library of Wales, 1960) and available in the Pembrokeshire Record Office at Haverfordwest. I am grateful to Professor Ralph A. Griffiths for the



loan of his copy. Further relevant deeds relating to Haverfordwest can be found in The National Archives (E210).

<sup>88</sup>Hanawalt, *The Wealth of Wives*, pp. 163–5.

<sup>89</sup>Stevens, *Urban Assimilation*, pp. 148–59; Smith, ‘Towards a history of women’, p. 15. Cf. Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life Cycle*; Barron, “‘The Golden Age’”.

<sup>90</sup>*Caernarvon Court Rolls*, pp. 152, 157–8.

## Castle and Town in Medieval Wales

### Dylan Foster Evans

Cyweirglod bun, cai'r glod bell,  
 Cyrch ystum caer a chastell.  
 Edrych a welych, wylan,  
 Eigr o liw ar y gaer lân.  
 Dywaid fy ngeiriau dyun,  
 Dewised fi, dos hyd fun.

Perfect praise of a girl, you are praised afar, make for the curve of fortress and castle. Gull, look for one of the colour of Eigr on the lovely fortress. Say my ardent words, may she choose me, go to the girl.<sup>1</sup>

These three couplets belong to the middle section of one of the most famous of Dafydd ap Gwilym's compositions, his *cywydd* to 'Yr Wylan' ('The Gull'). In this poem, probably composed in or around the 1340s (and thus within two generations of the Edwardian conquest of Wales), Dafydd sings the praises of the snow-white bird and entreats it to take his message of love to a copper-haired beauty whom he considers the fairest in Christendom. She is out of sight, separated from the poet by castle walls, but most certainly not out of mind. Whilst it is evident that the seafaring bird encapsulates a sense of freedom that is denied to the poet and that contrasts with the domineering presence of the fortifications, the castle itself seems not to be the subject of Dafydd's ire. Nevertheless, the poem may be read in such a way as to highlight an unmistakable undertone of aggression. The imperative 'cyrch' ('make for'), for instance, could be translated as 'attack', and although the poem's closing couplet: 'Oni chaf fwynaf annerch, / Fy nihenydd fydd y ferch' ('unless I get a most gentle response / the girl will be the death of me') may well be a product of literary convention, it adds to the sense of unease and violence in this short poem – the noun *dihenydd* was often used of an execution or other violent death.<sup>2</sup> These closing lines pick up on the threatening connotations of a military metaphor found in the poem's fourth line; the gull is there called 'dyrnfol heli' ('gauntlet of the brine').

This poem is not set at any named location, although critics have at various times espoused the claims of both Aberystwyth and Cricieth.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the ambivalent feelings expressed here must have been a common sensation amongst the Welsh who frequented the various castle towns of medieval Wales. The physical splendour of the castles, their walls gleaming in the sunshine,

must have struck Welsh and English onlookers alike. The power and wealth that were intimately bound up with them would have proved seductive, and in this poem that attraction is, in part, personalized in the figure of the nameless girl. On the other hand, the castles' role as oppressive agents of English rule could not be forgotten, for they were then, as they were to Thomas Pennant in the eighteenth century, 'the magnificent badge of our subjection'.<sup>4</sup>

That the Welsh had mixed feelings towards the castles is no surprise. As pointed out in an influential lecture given by Glyn Roberts in 1961, both antipathy and sympathy were characteristic of the Welsh response to their English conquerors and the infrastructure, both physical and administrative, that they imposed on Wales.<sup>5</sup> That a significant degree of fluidity of identity coexisted with official attempts to define the English and the Welsh as two clearly separate peoples was one of the main theses of Rees Davies's work on late medieval Wales, and recent literary scholarship, emanating from an era of more nuanced theoretical interpretations, has referred to this state of affairs as 'colonial ambivalence'.<sup>6</sup> Postcolonial criticism has proved to be particularly useful in analyzing the period between the Edwardian conquest and the wars of Owain Glyn Dŵr, an era which Rees Davies had himself characterized as 'Colonial Wales' back in 1974.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, that Davies's pioneering work foresaw many of the main critical impulses of postcolonial theory has been recently – and appropriately – recognized.<sup>8</sup> The English castles were the key visual aspects of colonial Wales, populated by a variety of officials, from powerful constables who were *ex officio* mayors of the boroughs, to archers, janitors and watchmen, all closely allied to the busy burgesses trying to make a uneasy living with and from the Welsh community around them.<sup>9</sup>

### *Castle and Welsh poetry before the Edwardian conquest*

Whilst the castles of Wales in Dafydd ap Gwilym's day were certainly repositories of English political supremacy and military power, that had not always been the case. The native Welsh rulers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries left a significant architectural legacy of their own, and although their courts (*llysoedd*) have largely disappeared, the stone castles that they built are still evident in the landscape.<sup>10</sup> Most numerous are those built by the princes of Gwynedd, which include, amongst others, Castell y Bere, Cricieth, Dolforwyn, Dolwyddelan, Dolbadarn, Caergwrle, and Ewloe.<sup>11</sup> Dinas Brân near Llangollen is a vivid statement of the former authority of the princes of northern Powys, while in the south, the castles of Carreg Cennen and Dryslwyn are testament to the ambitions of the princes of Deheubarth. The manpower and expertise required to build these structures, as well as their imposing physical presence, would have left a deep impression on those who witnessed their construction, or so one would imagine. Yet in the significant body of court poetry composed by the poets of the princes in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (nearly 13,000 lines, of which three quarters are eulogies or elegies to princes and noblemen), only one of the above castles is mentioned.<sup>12</sup> Whilst it is true that

some of them were built only shortly before the destruction of the native polities in 1277 and 1282/3, the poets' consistent willingness to air their detailed knowledge of various geographical features, human settlements and religious sites makes this absence significant.<sup>13</sup>

Of the castles built by the princes of Gwynedd listed above, only Cricieth is mentioned by name (and even then there is no reference to a building as such). In Einion ap Madog ap Rhahawd's *awdl* to Gruffudd ap Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, Gruffudd is hailed as 'Pendefig Cruciaith maith' ('lord of extensive Cricieth').<sup>14</sup> The poem is dated to around 1234 or soon after, and so was probably composed only a few years after Gruffudd's father, Llywelyn the Great, had started to build the castle. (Ironically, within a few years Gruffudd would find himself imprisoned in Cricieth by his younger half-brother Dafydd.) On the whole, however, it is clear that the poets had an aversion to naming these castles, perhaps for the simple reason that their sheer novelty sat uneasily with the poets' traditionalist discourse.<sup>15</sup> A parallel situation pertains with regards to the Cistercian monasteries, for although these enjoyed the princes' patronage, and were the final resting place of several of their number, they occur only rarely in the poetry. Strata Florida, for instance, is only mentioned once, in a poem by Y Prydydd Bychan ('The Little Poet', *fl.* 1222–68) to a relatively minor nobleman, while Strata Marcella in Powys is named only in the title of what seems to be a light-hearted *englyn* by Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr (*fl.* c. 1155–95) to the monks who supposedly refused his request to be buried within the monastery's grounds.<sup>16</sup> That traditionalist discourse may also explain why two sites upon which stone castles were built by the princes *do* occur quite regularly in the poetry. By the time the princes of Gwynedd built a stone castle there, Degannwy already had a long history, and its name (< Brittonic *\*Decantouion* 'territory of the *Decantae*') is suggestive of its antiquity.<sup>17</sup> Traditionally the chief court of Maelgwn Gwynedd (d. 547/9), it was also the commotal centre of Creuddyn and is mentioned several times in early Welsh literature.<sup>18</sup> Its significance did not depend on the later stone castle. A similar situation may be true of Dinefwr, as the first element of its name (*din* 'fort') indicates an early fortified site. Despite the fact that its history may not be traced as far back as that of Degannwy, by the twelfth century Dinefwr had come to be identified as the chief court of the princes of Deheubarth, although it may be that its pre-eminence was a response to the symbolic use of Aberffraw by the dynasty of Gwynedd. There is little to suggest that its significance relied specifically on the presence of a stone-built castle.<sup>19</sup>

It would be misleading, however, to suggest that the poets never referred to castles in a general sense. Indeed, when they did do so, they could choose from a variety of terms. One was *castell*, which is still the common word in modern Welsh. It was apparently borrowed from Latin, but its use was no doubt influenced by the existence of cognate forms in both English and French.<sup>20</sup> It is not a particularly common term in the poetry, and Morfydd Owen has argued

that the poets normally use it of Anglo-Norman or English fortifications.<sup>21</sup> Such is the case, for instance, when Llywarch ‘Prydydd y Moch’ praises Dafydd ab Owain Gwynedd for attacking ‘gwrdd gastell y Rug’ (‘the strong castle of Rug’).<sup>22</sup> But *castell* is also used of castles held by native rulers, as when Llywelyn ab Iorwerth and his retinue are praised for burning four castles in the vicinity of Ystradmeurig, Ceredigion, and for repeating the feat in Powys.<sup>23</sup> It seems that *castell* could be used of any castle, whether English or Welsh, but that the aesthetics of the time meant that patrons were more often praised for attacking castles than for defending them. What does seem to be the case is that *castell* is only rarely used in a metaphoric sense, despite the ubiquity of metaphor as a figure in the court poetry. A rare example occurs in Seisyll Bryffwrch’s elegy to Owain Gwynedd (d.1170) in which the late prince is praised as ‘castell Hiriell’ (‘a castle for [the land of] Hiriell’), a metonymic reference to Gwynedd by means of one of its mythical heroes.<sup>24</sup>

Other terms evidently used for what we could call castles include *tŵr* (borrowed from Middle English or French *tour*). In origin, this usage may have referred to the earlier (twelfth-century) style of castles which often comprised a single tower enclosed by a defensive bailey, but it was evidently used for later, more extensive castles as well. The other term is *caer*, an indigenous word normally translated as ‘fort’ or ‘fortress’ but which could be used for a castle or a fortified town. The most dramatic use of *tŵr* comes from the memorable *awdl* by Hywel Foel ap Griffri ap Pwyll Wyddel to request the freedom of Owain ap Gruffudd (d.c.1282). Owain had been imprisoned by his brother Llywelyn, and the poem combines praise for Owain with an entreaty to Llywelyn to release him from his chains. The opening line refers to Owain’s incarceration in a castle tower, perhaps that at Dolbadarn: ‘Gŵr ysydd yn nhŵr yn hir westi’ (‘a man is in a tower for a long residence’), a sharp contrast to the reference in the last line to the comfort and opulence of the ‘pebyllau pali’ (‘tents of silk’) enjoyed by Llywelyn.<sup>25</sup>

Hywel Foel’s poem suggests that, despite the reticence regarding the naming of castles built or held by the Welsh princes, they were by no means unfamiliar to the poets. In fact, two of the most significant setpiece events relating to the cultural patronage of the princes may be located in castles. The clearest example comes from Cardigan, whose castle was Anglo-Norman in origin but was seized by the Lord Rhys ap Gruffudd in 1165. Having taken it, he immediately set about demolishing it, lest it should be recaptured by his enemies. It is a sign of his growing confidence that he started rebuilding it in stone and mortar in 1171, and by 1176 the castle was ready for the greatest show of pageantry known from the age of the princes.<sup>26</sup> In the entry for that year, the chronicle *Brut y Tywysogyon* notes that the Lord Rhys held a splendid festival at the castle, with generous rewards available in the musical and poetic contests. The winning harpist was a young man from Rhys’s court, whilst the victorious bards were from Gwynedd. Most notably of all, the chronicle relates

that the festival, before it was held, 'was announced for a year through all Wales and England and Scotland and Ireland and the other isles'.<sup>27</sup> If one may take the chronicler at his word, the ambitious nature of this multinational festival is remarkable, and its staging in Cardigan Castle, formerly a bastion of English authority in west Wales, is significant.<sup>28</sup> Later generations in Wales have seized on this event as the earliest example of an *eisteddfod*; its eight-hundredth anniversary was marked by holding the 1976 National Eisteddfod at Cardigan.<sup>29</sup> And although it may be that all the poetry composed for the Lord Rhys' great festival has been lost, it has been suggested that the two *awdlau* to him by Seisyll Bryffwrch and Gwynfardd Brycheiniog were first performed at Cardigan castle in 1176.<sup>30</sup>

The other example of interface between castle and poetry involves the most famous poem of all from this large corpus of work. Following the death of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd on 12 December 1282, Edward I's forces overran Gwynedd. With Llywelyn dead and his brother Dafydd on the run, the first performance of Gruffudd ab yr Ynad Coch's emotional and apocalyptic elegy to Llywelyn must have taken place under great stress. Few places in Wales could have offered a secure and worthy setting for such a grim but regal occasion. One such was Castell y Bere in Merioneth, which held out against Edward's forces until 25 April 1283. The evidence that links the elegy to the castle is more than circumstantial, however, and includes the poet's use of minor place-names that suggests a detailed knowledge of Bere and its immediate hinterland. In particular, a reference to Llywelyn as 'llurig Nantcaw' ('the mailcoat of Nantcaw') shows familiarity on the part of the poet and presumably his audience with Nantcaw, a rather nondescript narrow valley a mile to the northwest of Castell y Bere.<sup>31</sup> Thus the castle built originally by Llywelyn ab Iorwerth may well have staged the final act of remembrance for his grandson and namesake.

It appears, then, that the nature of the poetic discourse of the age of the princes leads us to underestimate the role of the castle in literary patronage. That the poetry gives no indication of any urban element to the castles of the princes should be no surprise. Certainly, the princes during the thirteenth century were introducing to their dominions an increasing number of features that were common in England and beyond, such as building stone castles and developing towns.<sup>32</sup> Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, for instance, intended that a small town or market should develop alongside his castle at Dolforwyn.<sup>33</sup> Dryslwyn also had a small 'town' under the native princes, as did Degannwy and Dinefwr, it seems.<sup>34</sup> But any suggestion in the poetry of the realities of castle life within an urban milieu must wait until the fourteenth century.

#### *Beirdd yr Uchelwyr and the castle*

For the poets of the fourteenth century and beyond, generally known as *beirdd yr uchelwyr* after the *uchelwyr* (literally 'high men') who offered them

patronage, the castles were, with few exceptions, English institutions.<sup>35</sup> A lingering sense of resentment or hostility might be expected in their poetry, and that is certainly true of Dafydd ap Gwilym's only reference to Caernarfon castle. Sheltering from the rain under the eaves of a house that his would-be lover stubbornly refuses to leave, Dafydd comments sardonically that 'Ni bu'n y Gaer yn Arfon / Geol waeth no'r heol hon' ('there never was even in Caernarfon castle / a dungeon worse than this street').<sup>36</sup> It is not known whether Dafydd had any direct experience of prison life, but his fellow poet Llywelyn Goch ap Meurig Hen certainly did, for he was imprisoned in Harlech castle in 1346 awaiting trial for killing a fellow Welshman after both had enlisted in the English army.<sup>37</sup>

Yet in Dafydd's poems castle metaphors are often used to connote a *locus amoenus*. In two separate poems, the woodland glade in which he awaits his beloved is 'castell celli' ('a woodland castle' or 'a grove's castle'), while in another he invites a girl to sit with him 'dan fedw castell' ('under a castle of birch'). As noted by Dafydd Johnston in this volume, Newborough is the poet's 'castell a meddgell' ('castle and meadhouse'). And in a poem which may or may not be by Dafydd, the black cock is a 'castellwr' ('castellan'), an image which bring to mind a haughty and confident royal official, a perfect parallel for the black cock's strutting demeanour in the breeding season.<sup>38</sup>

Another of Edward I's creations in north Wales appears in a fourteenth-century satirical poem which derides a certain Einion, probably a wandering poet like the anonymous author himself:

Gwrw fryntlawn Einiawn yniâl, – mehinddryll,

Nid gŵr pâr-sefyll mal Pysyfâl;

Gŵr gofenaig saig soegial – Bewmares,

Nid gŵr a rodies gŵyr yr Eidial.<sup>39</sup>

Worthless Einion is rough and full of filth, a lump of fat, not a straight-speared man like Perceval; a man who yearns for the soggy meal of Beaumaris, not a man who has walked with the men of Italy.

Einion is derided for his desire to visit Beaumaris, and perhaps receive patronage there (either for his poetry or for his music, or both). The juxtaposition with Perceval (the native 'Peredur' is eschewed here for his French and English equivalent for the first time in extant Welsh poetry) and with the men of Italy shows both Einion and Beaumaris in a poor light. In these lines, Beaumaris comes across as a colourless and one-dimensional place which suffers in comparison to the confident cosmopolitanism of the poet's own frames of reference.

In the fourteenth century, then, references to castles are not uncommon and although they can be disparaging or dismissive they can also be positive and appreciative. Indeed, although the castles were agents of English control there



were in the fourteenth century no specific barriers to prevent Welshmen from being appointed constables. Unsurprisingly, however, such appointments were few and far between, but amongst the most noteworthy was that of Sir Hywel ap Gruffudd, better known as 'Hywel y Fwyall' ('Hywel of the Axe'), as constable of Cricieth. He was celebrated in a famous eulogy by Iolo Goch that was composed around 1380, towards the end of the renowned soldier's long and eventful life.<sup>40</sup> Already knighted by 1355, he fought at Poitiers in 1356 and by 1359 was appointed constable of Cricieth, a position he held until his death around 1381. Iolo's poem is a dream vision that is notable for the depth of its literary allusion. The description of the castle, nominally Cricieth, is clearly based on that of Eudaf's court at Caernarfon as found in the thirteenth-century prose tale *Breuddwyd Maxen*. Iolo's Cricieth is more of a romance castle than a warrior's stronghold, and the ladies depicted at the castle window echo a passage from the beginning of *Iarllles y Ffynnon* (*Owein*).<sup>41</sup> Eurys Rolant has argued that the poet intended to associate Syr Hywel with a glorious past before Caernarfon was defiled by Edward I, and that the poem is an expression of a sense of Welsh nationality and a yearning for a renewal of Welsh independence.<sup>42</sup> Dafydd Johnston, on the other hand, has convincingly argued that the poem expresses 'a central theme in Iolo's praise poetry, the emphasis on the role of the *uchelwr* in maintaining law and order in his local community'. As noted by Johnston, the repetition of the imperative *cadw* ('keep') in the poem's last lines is indicative of a desire to uphold the status quo and to keep the kingdom safe from military threats, whether foreign or domestic in origin.<sup>43</sup>

Hywel y Fwyall's nephew, Ieuan ab Einion ap Gruffudd, was the subject of a very different eulogy based on Cricieth castle. Like his uncle, Ieuan was a trusted royal servant, being sheriff of Caernarfonshire in 1385–90. But the poem to him by Owain Waed Da portrays Cricieth as a ruin and so must presumably be dated after Owain Glyn Dŵr's attack on the castle in the early years of the fifteenth century. For the poet, however, Ieuan himself is 'Castell y sy ddau cystal' ('a castle twice as good'), and his four sons are each able to stand in place of the castle's towers.<sup>44</sup> This is an early example of what would become a not-uncommon trope during the fifteenth century, in which individuals would be likened to towers, and a whole family (or just its head) likened to a castle. Death could then be imagined as a tower's collapse, or, as in a dramatic example by Lewys Glyn Cothi, as the felling of a tower by a cannon ball fired from heaven.<sup>45</sup> Comparing a patron to Caernarfon castle's Eagle Tower became especially common, although in the northeast it had a rival in Chirk castle's Adam's Tower.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, castle metaphors could appear in unlikely places. If an Englishman's home was his castle, then the same was true of a Welsh priest's chancel: 'castell yw'r gangell i'r gŵr' says Lewys Glyn Cothi of 'Sir' Hywel ab Ieuan, vicar of Darowen in Powys.<sup>47</sup> Throughout all this, there remains a strange duality about the poets' responses to the castle. Despite its obvious strength, a castle could represent the fragility of human life, open to

attack at any moment. On the other hand, its relative permanence could be contrasted with the brevity of human existence, as the Anglesey priest-poet ‘Sir’ Dafydd Trefor demonstrated as he contemplated the statue of Edward II at Caernarfon castle. Whither now the castle’s famous builder, he wondered.<sup>48</sup>

*Welsh hall and English castle after the Glyn Dŵr rebellion*

The final section of this chapter will look in detail at what is probably the most significant of late-medieval Welsh poems about a castle, namely the lengthy *cywydd* by Rhys Goch Eryri to Gwilym ap Gruffudd (d.1431) and the building, or re-building, of his hall at Penrhyn in the parish of Llandygái, Caernarfonshire.<sup>49</sup> This poem, one of the key texts of post-Glyn Dŵr Wales, compares Penrhyn to Caernarfon castle, and while acknowledging the military might of the latter, finds it wanting in comparison with the warm, cultured environment of the Welsh hall. Long sections praise the hall’s hospitality and its dazzling beauty, which are contrasted with the castle’s oppressive purpose and grey appearance. The poem ends on an audacious and confident note, asking whether the hall might rather be compared to the court of God in heaven. The significance of this poem is multifold. In the first place, dating as it does from the 1420s (or possibly just slightly earlier or later), it is one of the few poems to have survived from the immediate aftermath of the Glyn Dŵr rebellion. Secondly, in comparing Gwilym’s hall to Caernarfon castle, Rhys Goch gives a more detailed insight than usual into how English castles could be interpreted in fifteenth-century Wales. Whilst it would be easy to read this poem as a simple contrast between a welcoming Welsh hall and a threatening English castle, a closer look at the precise historical background of this poem, with due regard to the nuanced approach to the Welsh/English division recently championed by Helen Fulton, suggests a rather different interpretation.<sup>50</sup>

The turbulent career of Gwilym ap Gruffudd ap Gwilym has been described in detail by A. D. Carr, and his importance as the first in a long line of poetic patrons at Penrhyn has been discussed by D. J. Bowen.<sup>51</sup> Gwilym had succeeded in collecting both lands and offices prior to Glyn Dŵr’s rebellion, and although his participation would later cause him some difficulties, the rebellion was to prove a turning point in his career. That the poem post-dates Glyn Dŵr’s war is made clear by the poet’s stated wish that Sioned, Gwilym’s wife, should enjoy a long life alongside her husband and heir. This must refer to Joan or Jonet Stanley, whom Gruffudd had almost certainly married in 1413.<sup>52</sup> His first wife had been Morfudd (d. by 1406), the daughter of Goronwy Fychan ap Tudur of Penmynydd who was, like Gwilym ap Gruffudd, a descendant in the male line of Ednyfed Fychan (d.1246), Llywelyn the Great’s seneschal or chief officer. Goronwy was one of the most important patrons of poetry in north Wales, and was first cousin to one of the others, Owain Glyn Dŵr. He had been appointed constable of Beaumaris castle only four days before his death by drowning in Kent on 22 March 1382.<sup>53</sup> His son Tudur died some time before 1400, and his lands were inherited by Morfudd, who had

married Gwilym by 1389, if not sooner. Goronwy's death deprived Wales of the possibility of a Welshspeaking court based at Beaumaris castle at around the same time as the death of Sir Hywel y Fwyall of Cricieth.<sup>54</sup> Yet it also paved the way for a further increase in Gwilym ap Gruffudd's wealth, a fortune which would in time be passed on to his heir by Joan Stanley, at the expense of Tudur Fychan, his son by Morfudd.<sup>55</sup>

Penrhyn itself came to Gwilym ap Gruffudd through his mother, as was recorded in a note apparently written by Gwilym and Joan's son William (or Gwilym) Fychan, soon after Gwilym ap Gruffudd's death in 1431: 'Ieuan ap Gruff' ap Mortyn tolde to me William Gruffith that the manor of the Penryn that my Fader has bylde stondes vppon the lande of Mad' ap Gron' Vichan Fader to my graunt dame Generys vch Mad' ap Gron Vichan'.<sup>56</sup> Yet it seems that there had been a hall at this site before Gwilym ap Gruffudd's day, perhaps as early as the beginning of the fourteenth century. The medieval hall has now been incorporated into Thomas Hopper's nineteenth-century Gothic castle, but vestiges of the early building do survive. Neil Johnstone has suggested that the original hall dates from the early fourteenth century, and may have been influenced by Ty'n y Mwd (Aber), a hall first built by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd and then reworked by its new English owners.<sup>57</sup> A contrasting, though not mutually exclusive, inspiration was suggested by D. B. Hague, who argued that an eighteenth-century drawing of Penrhyn shows two early fourteenth-century windows that 'are so like those in Caernarvon Castle that they would signify a deliberate attempt on the part of the then anglophile Tudors to emulate the work of their new masters'.<sup>58</sup> As well as drawing attention to the existence of a medieval chapel, Hague notes that a representation of the Stanley arms impaled on those of Gwilym ap Gruffudd was still to be seen on the hall's windows in 1764.<sup>59</sup>

Despite his already significant wealth, Gwilym's marriage to Joan Stanley connected him to a wider sphere of influence. Joan, whose first husband had been the Caernarfon burgess Robert Parys (d. 1407), was a member of the Stanley family of Hooton, Cheshire. Both the Stanley and the Parys families had a conservative taste in forenames, and the contemporary existence of several individuals by the name of William Stanley and Robert Parys make the historian's task in tracing precise family connections more difficult than it might be.<sup>60</sup> It appears, however, that Joan was a daughter of Sir William Stanley of Hooton (c.1368–1428) and thus a sister of the younger Sir William (c.1385–before 1424). Even before marrying Gwilym, she would doubtless have been familiar with the politics of north Wales. Her father's paternal uncle, Sir John Stanley (c.1350–1414), was a valued administrator and soldier under Richard II who had been rewarded with the Welsh lordships of Mold and Hope. During the Glyn Dŵr rebellion he served under the young prince of Wales and fought alongside him in the battle of Shrewsbury (21 July 1403). Both men were wounded, in Stanley's case in the throat. When asked what should be

made of the rebels and their lands in his home county of Cheshire, he reportedly rattled a hoarse reply: 'burn and slay, burn and slay'.<sup>61</sup> Amongst his opponents that day were his nephew, Joan's father, as well as her brother William, together with their near neighbour Sir John Poole, who had been constable of Caernarfon castle during the early months of the Glyn Dŵr rebellion.<sup>62</sup> Although Sir John Stanley was initially awarded some of the lands of his rebel kinsmen, they were soon rehabilitated, and the elder Sir William and Sir John Poole, before the end of August 1403, were given special responsibility for defending the coast from Welsh rebels. They were officially pardoned the following November.<sup>63</sup>

As well as enjoying a notable military career, Sir John Stanley may – if somewhat indirectly – be said to have literary connections in three countries. Most famously, it has been suggested that he was the patron of the anonymous late-fourteenth century author of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.<sup>64</sup> That poem is set mainly in the 'wilderness of Wirral' and includes a memorable description of a castle which offers an instructive contrast to that provided by Rhys Goch.<sup>65</sup> Although the Green Knight's castle is evidently an effective defensive structure, the overriding impression given is that of its beauty, which marks it as the fairest than any knight owned ('A castel þe comlokest þat euer kny3te a3te', line 767). But Sir Gawain's response to the castle is that of an individual far removed in terms of nation and class from Rhys Goch Eryri. Sir John Stanley was also well known amongst the Irish poets, for, having been appointed lieutenant of Ireland and having incurred the wrath of the Irish, he was 'rhymed to death' by the bardic family of the Ó hUigínn (O'Higgins), and, according to John O'Donovan's translation of the Annals of the Four Masters, 'died of the virulence of the lampoons'.<sup>66</sup>

Joan Stanley's relocation westwards from Cheshire was not a solitary venture; her brothers John, Peter, Edmund and Rowland also moved to Wales.<sup>67</sup> There they succeeded in carving a niche for themselves in the lordships and principality of north Wales, where they made the most of their ties of family and service. John Stanley became constable of Caernarfon castle in 1427, and placed Rowland in charge there in 1437–8.<sup>68</sup> John then surrendered the constableness in 1441 'so that he and his son could be installed in survivorship'.<sup>69</sup> John had also picked up other lucrative offices, becoming sheriff of Anglesey in 1425 and of Merioneth in 1433.<sup>70</sup> For Gwilym ap Gruffudd, this was at best a mixed blessing. Although his increasingly powerful kinsmen could exert their influence on his behalf, Ralph Griffiths has concluded that 'the Stanleys were a serious obstacle to outstanding Welshmen in north Wales acquiring political power'.<sup>71</sup> Coupled with the anti-Welsh penal legislation of the post-Glyn Dŵr period, this meant that Gwilym would have known that he stood little chance of repeating his former father-in-law's feat of attaining the constableness of a royal castle. Remarkably, however, Gwilym did petition the king to be exempted from the penal legislation, on the basis that

not only was his wife English, but that he himself was almost entirely English and that he had been entirely faithful during the Glyn Dŵr rebellion.<sup>72</sup> This fabrication was born of frustration, a frustration to which Rhys Goch's poem also gives voice.

Robert Parys, on the other hand, *had* been in charge of a royal castle, firstly as his father's deputy at Caernarfon and then in his own right.<sup>73</sup> He is not named in Rhys Goch's poem, and yet his is a significant presence.<sup>74</sup> Joan's switch from being wife of Robert to wife of Gwilym is also a switch from Caernarfon castle to the hall at Penrhyn, a move echoed in the poem's own symbolism and structure. Robert Parys himself was not of the same social standing as the Stanleys, but had nevertheless benefited from his father's status as one of Caernarfon's most prominent burgesses. By the end of the fourteenth century, Robert Parys senior (d.1405) was a significant officeholder in Caernarfon and beyond who owned two taverns, six burgages and two hundred acres of land outside the town.<sup>75</sup> His family home was almost certainly located in the gardens opposite the castle.<sup>76</sup> On the eve of Owain Glyn Dŵr's revolt, he also shared the farm of Dolbadarn with Rhys ap Tudur, Owain's cousin and the uncle of Gwilym ap Gruffudd's first wife Morfudd, and would doubtlessly have been well known to Gwilym himself.<sup>77</sup> But the revolt itself saw them on opposing sides.

Robert senior was appointed constable of Caernarfon for life in May 1401, but it was his son who took increasing responsibility as the rebellion threatened both castle and town.<sup>78</sup> Early in 1404 Robert junior was in desperate straits as the deputy constable of Caernarfon when it came under a combined Welsh and French attack. Having initially been unable to get any communications, let alone any men, out through the siege, he eventually managed to smuggle a woman through the Welsh lines to bring news of the dire situation to Chester. On 16 January 1404, William Venables and Roger Brescy wrote to the king from Chester summarizing Robert Parys's letter:

The Welsh rebels of Owain Glyn Dŵr with the French and all his other forces are preparing to assault the town and castle of Caernarfon. They have begun to do so on the very day we write these letters with engines, siege equipment, and very long ladders. There are only twenty-eight fighting men in the town and castle and that is too small a force. Eleven of the more able men who were there during the last siege have died, some of them from wounds suffered at the time of the assault, and others of plague. The castle and town are in very great danger as the bearer of these letters will testify to you by word of mouth.<sup>79</sup>

Gwilym ap Gruffudd's whereabouts at this time are not known, although he had probably joined the rebels by then and may well have been present at the siege, for Caernarfon castle stands only about a dozen miles from Penrhyn. Despite the near panic discernible in this letter, Robert Parys and his men withstood the siege, and the Welsh and French withdrew. Less than ten years later, however,

Gwilym would be married to Robert's wife. It was a key moment for him, for even though he had surrendered to the authorities in 1405, he had still not managed to free himself entirely from the taint of rebellion. Indeed, on 22 August 1413, shortly before the arrival of Thomas, earl of Arundel, to lead a commission into the rebellion, Thomas Barneby, the notorious chamberlain of North Wales and by then constable of Caernarfon, arranged that Gwilym, amongst others, should not be indicted for unlawfully raising forces in Anglesey and Caernarfonshire. In the words of Ralph Griffiths, 'Barneby was prepared to conceal them in open contempt for the law'.<sup>80</sup> This, of course, was within a few months, if that, of his marriage to Joan Stanley. It was a piece of sharp practice for which Gwilym was no doubt very grateful.

It should be evident by now that Rhys Goch's choice of Caernarfon castle as the basis of an extended comparison has as much to do with Gwilym's own experiences and personal ties as it did with the probable architectural similarities, although these in turn may well point to an earlier generation's desire to make a different kind of connection. Rhys Goch's poem opens with a description of a tower reaching to the stars, under an eagle banner. The location is named as *Caer Sallog*, one of the numerous names by which Caernarfon was known in Welsh literature, but in a nod in the direction of its present rulers, it is said to be a place for a tournament (l. 5), 'a brave [or fierce] conqueror's tower' ('*Tŵr dewr gwncwerwr*', l. 6), built at the expense of Edward 'y llewpart llwyd' ('the grey leopard', l. 8). The praise is measured, if not warm. Then the poet playfully asks 'Ai tebyg tŷ gwedy gwin, / *Dâr Brynaich, i dŵr brenin?*' ('is a house of English [lit. Bernician] oak, after wine, similar to a king's tower?'; lines 11–12). The thrust of the poem, of course, is that Gwilym's hall is superior, and yet the reference to English oak, respected for its quality, refutes a simple English/Welsh dichotomy. Rhys goes on to state that the oaken fort which offers patronage to poets or musicians is a hundred times better than the grey and angry Eagle Tower. In praising Penrhyn, Rhys significantly associates both the hall and its owner with the figure of Taliesin (l. 55), the legendary Welsh poet and seer, and with prophecies ('*daroganau*', l. 63) which we may assume relate to the destruction of the English and the resumption of Welsh, or British, rule over Britain. This leads to a more direct assessment of the castle's oppressive role:

Y tŵr celffaint cyn teirawr

Ochrog murdew corniog mawr,

A luniwyd dan ei linyrn,

Gyrch dig, i gael gwarchae dyn,

Ac i ostwng ag ystyr

Calonnau a gwarrau gwŷr.

A mawrddy talm, a murdew,

Mab Gruffudd, iôn gleifrudd glew,

A bair llawenydd bob awr

Ac urddas pob rhyw gerddawr. (lines 69–78)

The wizened tower was built under a plumb line, angled, thick-walled, turreted, and big, in order to incarcerate, and within three hours to force down the hearts and necks of men. But the thick-walled house for a throng, belonging to the son of Gruffudd, a brave lord with a bloody pike, causes merriment every hour and honour for every poet.

A simple ethnic contrast is then eschewed once more, as Rhys uses London as a measure for the learning to be found in Gwilym's hall (l. 95). Indeed, the poet's choice to hail Gwilym as Lancelot ('Lawnslod', l. 25; the earliest known example in Welsh poetry) indicates a willingness to embrace texts whose origins were known to lie outside Wales. In the final section of the poem, however, Rhys Goch rather surprisingly rejects the comparison with the castle that he has used so extensively thus far. Recognizing that he is about to make a very bold claim ('llyna hy hawl!', l. 109). Rhys Goch asks whether one might dare to compare God's court to an earthly counterpart, and if that be allowed, he states that Gwilym's court could be said to be more akin to the court of God rather than to a court of man. Caernarfon castle is conclusively rejected, and Penrhyn is placed on an altogether higher plane.

#### *A new sense of place*

The detailed discussion of Gwilym ap Gruffudd's background makes it clear that Rhys Goch's reaction to Caernarfon castle cannot be taken to be typical of a 'Welsh response' to English castles.<sup>81</sup> Rhys Goch's choice of Caernarfon as a point of comparison must have resonated in many ways with Gwilym, for it encapsulates both the successes and frustrations of his career. Indeed, the questions posed by Rhys Goch regarding his own choice of material for the poem foreground the problems faced by poet and patron alike. This is a very self-aware poem by a poet conscious of the artistic and political implications of his choice of imagery. He is nonetheless able to confirm Penrhyn's superiority, and the poem may be read as a cathartic affirmation of a shift away from the violence of the earlier part of Gwilym's life towards a more cultured and stable future, in which Joan Stanley is to be a crucial partner. Both husband and wife were from families implicated in treason, and the disavowal of the events of the first decade of the fifteenth century may have appealed to both, as evidenced by Gwilym's optimistic petition to the king. In fact, the opinion of the Welsh community itself with regards to Gwilym may have been equivocal, as suggested by parts of Rhys Goch's elegy to him.<sup>82</sup> Likewise, the closing lines of the poem to Penrhyn offer to take the audience away from temporal tensions and the clash between Welsh hall and English castle. A sense of unease pervades certain sections of the poetry to Gwilym ap Gruffudd, unease about the past, the present and the future. As noted by Helen Fulton, 'the series of



collaborations, especially between the elite *uchelwyr* and the ruling English . . . splits the subject of Welsh poetic discourse and locates it in two places at once'.<sup>83</sup> In the case of Gwilym ap Gruffudd and Rhys Goch Eryri, those two places are castle and hall.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Text from Dafydd Johnston (general ed.), *Cerddi Dafydd ap Gwilym* (Caerdydd, 2010) [= *CDG*], p. 188 (45.11–16). This poem was edited and translated by Dafydd Johnston. The translations of Dafydd ap Gwilym's poems in this chapter are taken from the editors' own translations on [www.dafyddapgwilym.net](http://www.dafyddapgwilym.net). Other translations are my own, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup>On *cyrchu*, which is often used in Middle Welsh to convey a sortie against a castle or other fortified site, see *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru* (Caerdydd, 1950–2002) [= *GPC*], s.v. *cyrchaf*. Note especially the following example from 'Oianau Myrddin' from the Black Book of Carmarthen: 'a chirchu o pell castell gollwin', in A. O. H. Jarman (ed.), *Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin* (Caerdydd, 1982), p. 32 (17.110). For the literary convention in the closing couplet, see Helen Fulton, *Dafydd ap Gwilym and the European Context* (Cardiff, 1989), pp. 166–7. On *dihenydd*, see *GPC* s.v.

<sup>3</sup>D. J. Bowen, 'Dafydd ap Gwilym a'r trefydd drwg', in J. E. Caerwyn Williams (ed.), *Ysgrifau Beirniadol X* (Dinbych, 1977), p. 193; Anthony Conran, 'The redhead on the castle wall: Dafydd ap Gwilym's "Yr Wylan" ("The Seagull")', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 1992, 40–3.

<sup>4</sup>T. Pennant, *A Tour in Wales. MDCCLXX* (London 1778–83), vol. 2, p. 214.

<sup>5</sup>Glyn Roberts, 'Wales and England: antipathy and sympathy 1282–1400', in *Aspects of Welsh History: Selected Papers of the late Glyn Roberts* (Cardiff, 1969), pp. 295–318; first published in *Welsh History Review*, 1.4 (1963), 375–95.

<sup>6</sup>Helen Fulton, 'Class and nation: defining the English in late-medieval Welsh poetry', in Ruth Kennedy and Simon Meecham-Jones (eds), *Authority and Subjugation in Writing of Medieval Wales* (New York, 2008), pp. 191–212, especially at pp. 199–201.

<sup>7</sup>R. R. Davies, 'Colonial Wales', *Past and Present*, 65 (1974), 3–23.

<sup>8</sup>Bruce W. Holsinger, 'Medieval studies, postcolonial studies, and the genealogies of critique', *Speculum*, 77.4 (2002), 1195–227, especially at 1200.

<sup>9</sup>On castle officials, see E. A. Lewis, *The Mediaeval Boroughs of Snowdonia* (London, 1912), pp. 116–17, 154–5.

<sup>10</sup>In general, the castles were not built in the vicinity of the *llysoedd*, see Neil Johnstone, 'An investigation into the locations of the royal courts of thirteenth-century Gwynedd', in Nancy Edwards (ed.), *Landscape and Settlement in Medieval Wales* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 55–69 (at p. 61). See also David Longley, 'The royal courts of the Welsh princes in Gwynedd, ad 400–1283', in Edwards

(ed.), *Landscape and Settlement*, pp. 41–54 (at p. 53). For a recent excavation of a llys of the princes of Gwynedd, see Neil Johnstone, ‘Cae Llys Rhosyr: a court of the princes of Gwynedd’, *Studia Celtica*, 33 (1999), 251–95.

<sup>11</sup>On the castles of the rulers of Gwynedd, see Lawrence Butler, ‘The castles of the princes of Gwynedd’, in Diane M. Williams and John R. Kenyon (eds), *The Impact of the Edwardian Castles in Wales* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 27–36.

<sup>12</sup>On the extent and content of the corpus, see Morfydd E. Owen, ‘Literary convention and historical reality: the court in the Welsh poetry of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries’, *Études Celtiques*, 29 (1992), 71.

<sup>13</sup>For a useful index to place and personal names, see Ann Parry Owen, ‘Mynegai i enwau priod ym marddoniaeth Beirdd y Tywysogion’, *Llên Cymru*, 20 (1997), 25–45.

<sup>14</sup>N. G. Costigan (Bosco) et al. (eds), *Gwaith Dafydd Benfras ac Eraill o Feirdd Hanner Cyntaf y Drydedd Ganrif ar Ddeg* (Caerdydd, 1995), pp. 347–59, quoting from p. 351 (23.9). This is the only extant poem by Einion.

<sup>15</sup>Owen, ‘Literary convention’, 76.

<sup>16</sup>Rhian Andrews et al. (eds), *Gwaith Bleddyn Fardd a Beirdd Eraill Ail Hanner y Drydedd Ganrif ar Ddeg* (Caerdydd, 1996), p. 152 (20.12): an elegy by Y Prydydd Bychan to a certain Blegywryd, edited by Morfydd E. Owen; Nerys Ann Jones and Ann Parry Owen (eds), *Gwaith Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr II* (Caerdydd, 1995), pp. 255–60.

<sup>17</sup>Hywel Wyn Owen and Richard Morgan, *Dictionary of the Place-names of Wales* (Llandysul, 2007), pp. 120–1.

<sup>18</sup>On Degannwy and Welsh literary culture, see Marged Haycock (ed.), *Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin* (Aberystwyth, 2007), pp. 283–5.

<sup>19</sup>On the significance of Dinefwr within Deheubarth, see J. Beverley Smith, ‘Treftadaeth Deheubarth’, in Nerys Ann Jones and Huw Pryce (eds), *Yr Arglwydd Rhys* (Caerdydd, 1996), pp. 18–22.

<sup>20</sup>GPC s.v.

<sup>21</sup>Owen, ‘Literary convention’, 76.

<sup>22</sup>Elin M. Jones with Nerys Ann Jones (ed.), *Gwaith Llywarch ap Llywelyn ‘Prydydd y Moch’* (Caerdydd, 1991), p. 11 (1.118).

<sup>23</sup>Andrews et al. (eds), *Gwaith Bleddyn Fardd*, p. 307 (20.53–4) and p. 308 (20.85– 8). This anonymous poem is edited by Nerys Ann Jones.

<sup>24</sup>Kathleen Anne Bramley et al. (eds), *Gwaith Llywelyn Fardd I ac Eraill o Feirdd y Ddeuddegfed Ganrif* (Caerdydd, 1994), p. 379 (22.45). The poem is edited by Morfydd E. Owen.

<sup>25</sup>The poem is edited in Rhian M. Andrews (ed.), *Welsh Court Poems* (Cardiff, 2007), p. 25, quoting 19.1 and 38; and by Brynley F. Roberts in Andrews et al. (eds), *Gwaith Bleddyn Fardd*, pp. 191–9, quoting p. 195 (23.1 and 38).

<sup>26</sup>Ralph A. Griffiths, *Conquerors and Conquered in Medieval Wales* (Stroud, 1994), p. 283. This chapter was originally published as ‘The making of medieval Cardigan’, *Ceredigion*, 11.2 (1990), 97–133 (at 105).

<sup>27</sup>*Brut y Tywysogyon, or The Chronicle of the Princes. Peniarth MS 20 Version*, trans. Thomas Jones (Cardiff, 1952), p. 71. This entry, with minor variations, occurs in all versions of the *Brut*.

<sup>28</sup>J. E. Caerwyn Williams, ‘Yr Arglwydd Rhys ac “Eisteddfod” Aberteifi 1176: y cefndir diwylliannol’, in Jones and Pryce (eds), *Yr Arglwydd Rhys*, pp. 94–128.

<sup>29</sup>It should be noted, however, that the term *eisteddfod* is not used in the medieval sources.

<sup>30</sup>Nerys Ann Jones, ‘Canu mawl Beirdd y Tywysogion i’r Arglwydd Rhys’, in Jones and Pryce (eds), *Yr Arglwydd Rhys*, p. 139.

<sup>31</sup>The poem is edited by Rhian M. Andrews, *Gwaith Bleddyn Fardd*, pp. 414–33. On the suggestion of a first performance at Castell y Bere (originally proposed by Tomos Roberts), see p. 414. On Nantcaw, see pp. 424 (36.48) and 431.

<sup>32</sup>Huw Pryce, ‘Welsh rulers and European change, c.1100–1282’, in Huw Pryce and John Watts (eds), *Power and Identity in the Middle Ages: Essays in Memory of Rees Davies* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 37–51, especially pp. 39 and 40.

<sup>33</sup>Ian Soulsby, *The Towns of Medieval Wales* (Chichester, 1983), pp. 130–1; Ralph A. Griffiths, ‘Wales and the Marches’, in D. M. Palliser (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, vol. 1 600–1540* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 700.

<sup>34</sup>Soulsby, *Towns of Medieval Wales*, p. 133; Griffiths, ‘Wales and the Marches’, p. 695.

<sup>35</sup>On the poets’ response to the Edwardian castles, see Dylan Foster Evans, “‘Tŵr dewr gwnwerwr” (“a brave conqueror’s tower”): Welsh poetic responses to the Edwardian castles’, in Williams and Kenyon (eds), *The Impact of the Edwardian Castles in Wales*, pp. 121–8.

<sup>36</sup>CDG, p. 396 (97.27–8); the poem is edited by Huw Meirion Edwards.

<sup>37</sup>A. D. Carr, ‘The coroner in fourteenth-century Merioneth’, *Journal of the Merioneth Historical and Record Society*, 11.3 (1992), 250–1. The result of this case is not known, but Llywelyn Goch’s literary career had hardly got underway in 1346. It was to continue for several decades, see Dafydd Johnston (ed.), *Gwaith Llywelyn Goch ap Meurig Hen* (Aberystwyth, 1998).

<sup>38</sup>CDG, pp. 218 (53.11), 294 (71.35), 178 (41.11), 84 (18.26), and [www.dafyddapgwilym.net](http://www.dafyddapgwilym.net) (162.7). Poems 18, 53 and 162 were edited by A. Cynfael Lake, 41 and 71 by Dylan Foster Evans.

<sup>39</sup>Huw M. Edwards (ed.), *Gwaith Prydydd Breuan, Rhys ap Dafydd ab Einion, Hywel Ystorm, a Cherddi Dychan Dienw o Lyfr Coch Hergest* (Aberystwyth, 2000), p. 91 (7.25–8).

<sup>40</sup>D. R. Johnston (ed.), *Gwaith Iolo Goch* (Caerdydd, 1988), poem 2; English translation: Dafydd Johnston (ed. and trans), *Iolo Goch: Poems* (Llandysul 1993), poem 2). For discussions, see D. J. Bowen, 'Cywydd Iolo Goch i Syr Hywel y Fwyall', *Llên Cymru*, 15.3–4 (1987–8), 275–88; David Johnston, 'Iolo Goch and the English: Welsh poetry and politics in the fourteenth century', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 12 (1986), 86–7.

<sup>41</sup>See Brynley F. Roberts (ed.), *Breudwyd Maxen Wledic* (Dublin, 2005), pp. xc–xcii.

<sup>42</sup>Eurys Rolant, 'Cenedlaetholdeb Iolo Goch', *Y Genhinen*, 18.1 (1967–8), 30.

<sup>43</sup>Johnston, 'Iolo Goch and the English', 87.

<sup>44</sup>Barry J. Lewis (ed.), *Gwaith Madog Benfras ac Eraill o Feirdd y Bedwaredd Ganrif ar Ddeg* (Aberystwyth, 2007), p. 243 (15.24).

<sup>45</sup>Dafydd Johnston (ed.), *Gwaith Lewys Glyn Cothi* (Aberystwyth, 1996), p. 394 (179.43–6).

<sup>46</sup>D. J. Bowen, 'Tŵr Adam', *Llên Cymru*, 17 (1992–3), 142–3.

<sup>47</sup>'The man's chancel is his castle': Johnston (ed.), *Gwaith Lewys Glyn Cothi*, p. 437 (200.48).

<sup>48</sup>Rhiannon Ifans (ed.), *Gwaith Syr Dafydd Trefor* (Aberystwyth, 2005), p. 84 (16.17–22). 'Sir' Dafydd seems to credit Edward II with building the castle. Much work was done there while Edward was prince of Wales and then after Edward I's death in 1307. It may also be the case that there was confusion regarding the identity of the statue. I discuss Owain Waed Da's poem to Ieuan ab Einion, Lewys Glyn Cothi's elegy, and 'Sir' Dafydd Trefor's cywydd in more detail in "'Tŵr dewr gwncewerwr", pp. 123–6.

<sup>49</sup>Dylan Foster Evans (ed.), *Gwaith Rhys Goch Eryri* (Aberystwyth, 2007), pp. 49–54; the poem is 116 lines long.

<sup>50</sup>See note 6 above.

<sup>51</sup>A. D. Carr, 'Gwilym ap Gruffudd and the rise of the Penrhyn estate', *Welsh History Review*, 15.1 (1990), 1–20; D. J. Bowen, 'Y canu i Gwilym ap Gruffudd (m. 1431) o'r Penrhyn a'i fab Gwilym Fychan (m. 1483)', *Dwned*, 8 (2002), 59–78. My discussion of Gwilym's career is based mainly on Carr's work.

<sup>52</sup>Carr, 'Gwilym ap Gruffudd', 10.

<sup>53</sup>For references, see Barry J. Lewis, (ed.), *Gwaith Gruffudd ap Maredudd, I: Canu i Deulu Penmynydd* (Aberystwyth, 2003), pp. 15–17, 147–8. The fact that Goronwy died a century to the year after Llywelyn ap Gruffudd was not lost on contemporaries, see *ibid.*, p. 151.

<sup>54</sup>Through his grandmother, Sir Hywel was also a descendant of Ednyfed Fychan, see Lewis (ed.), *Gwaith Madog Benfras*, p. 138.

<sup>55</sup>Carr, 'Gwilym ap Gruffudd', 11.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, 5 n20.

<sup>57</sup>Neil Johnstone, 'Llys and maerdref: the royal courts of the princes of Gwynedd', *Studia Celtica*, 34 (2000), 196. Llywelyn's hall was apparently rebuilt after a fire in 1289, and was the subject of further work in 1303/4, see *ibid.*, 195.

<sup>58</sup>Hague, 'Penrhyn Castle', 30–1.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, 33, 32.

<sup>60</sup>On the Stanleys in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, see W. Fergusson Irvine, 'The early Stanleys', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 105 (1954 for 1953), 45–68. On the Parys family, see Ralph A. Griffiths, 'An immigrant elite in the later Middle Ages: locating the De Parys family in north Wales and Chester', *Welsh History Review*, 25.2 (2010), 168–200.

<sup>61</sup>Michael J. Bennet, 'Sir John Stanley (c.1350–1414)', in H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (eds), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography: from the Earliest Times to the Year 2000*, vol. 52 (new edn, Oxford, 2004), p. 226.

<sup>62</sup>Peter McNiven, 'The men of Cheshire and the rebellion of 1403', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 129 (1980), 15.

<sup>63</sup>McNiven, 'The men of Cheshire', 23–4.

<sup>64</sup>Edward Wilson, 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and the Stanley family of Stanley, Storeton, and Hooton', *Review of English Studies*, 30.3 (1979), 308–16; also Bennet, 'Sir John Stanley'.

<sup>65</sup>J. R. R. Tolkien and E. V. Gordon (eds), *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, rev. Norman Davies (2nd edn, Oxford, 1967), pp. 22–3 (lines 763–810); see also Michael Thompson, 'Castles', in Derek Brewer and Jonathan Gibson (eds), *A Companion to the Gawain-poet* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 119–30.

<sup>66</sup>J. O'Donovan (ed. and trans.), *Annála Rioghachta Éireann. Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters, from the earliest period to the year 1616*, vol. IV (Dublin, 1851), pp. 818 and 819.

<sup>67</sup>Michael K. Jones, 'Sir William Stanley of Holt: politics and family allegiance in the late fifteenth century', *Welsh History Review*, 14.1 (1988), 3, 5–6.

<sup>68</sup>Ralph A. Griffiths, 'Patronage, politics and the Principality of Wales, 1413–1461', in H. Hearder and H. R. Loyn (eds), *British Government and Administration: Studies Presented to S. B. Chrimes* (Cardiff, 1974), p. 71.

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, 'Patronage', p. 81.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 85. In his elegy to Gwilym, Rhys Goch Eryri states that the justiciar of North Wales would do Gwilym's bidding in an instance, see Foster Evans (ed.), *Gwaith Rhys Goch*, p. 55 (3.13–14). But the justiciarship itself was well beyond Gwilym.

<sup>72</sup>Carr, 'Gwilym ap Gruffudd', 10–11.

<sup>73</sup>Griffiths, 'Immigrant elite', 194–5.

<sup>74</sup>Bowen, 'Y canu', 71–2.

<sup>75</sup>K. Williams-Jones, 'Carnarvon', in Ralph A. Griffiths (ed.), *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales* (Cardiff, 1978), p. 87; Griffiths, 'Immigrant elite', 186–92.

<sup>76</sup>Griffiths, 'Immigrant elite', 180.

<sup>77</sup>Williams-Jones, 'Carnarvon', p. 99; Griffiths, 'Immigrant elite', 193.

<sup>78</sup>Griffiths, 'Immigrant elite', 192, 194–5.

<sup>79</sup>Quoting from the translation by R. R. Davies, *The Revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr* (Oxford, 1995), p. 251. For the original French and an alternative translation, see Henry Ellis (ed.), *Original Letters, Illustrative of English History*, 2nd series, vol. I (London, 1827), pp. 33–4.

<sup>80</sup>Griffiths, *Conquerors and Conquered*, p. 128. The chapter was first published as 'The Glyndŵr rebellion in North Wales through the eyes of an Englishman', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 22.2 (1967), 151–68 (at 160).

<sup>81</sup>The town itself is ignored, perhaps out of social snobbery (cf. Fulton, 'Class and nation', p. 195), but probably because it is irrelevant to Rhys Goch's vision.

<sup>82</sup>Bowen, 'Y canu', 64–6.

<sup>83</sup>Fulton, 'Class and nation', p. 210.

## The City of Chester in Gruffudd ap Maredudd's *Awdl i'r Grog o Gaer*

Catherine McKenna

The praise of notable places is a tradition of early origin and long standing in Welsh poetry, and indeed in the poetry of many linguistic traditions. A poem in praise of Tenby, in south Wales, the ninth-century 'Edmyg Dinbych', is among the earliest surviving Welsh poems, and Iolo Goch's *cywydd* on Owain Glyn Dŵr's residence at Sycharth among the most celebrated poems of the extraordinarily fertile fourteenth century. I begin with a glance at a few of the highlights of this tradition and its permutations because it affords one of the lenses through which we can best examine the surprisingly minimal visibility of town churches in the poetry of an urbanizing late-medieval Wales.

'Edmyg Dinbych' celebrates the imposing natural setting of a fortress overlooking the sea in the kingdom of Dyfed, a court in which the lord dispenses extravagant hospitality at the New Year. The poem is filled with visual and auditory evocations of the sea, of gulls, eagles, and other seabirds, of beer drinking and poetry. The images are relatively few, but they are deployed very effectively, with a rhythmic repetition that itself echoes the rhythm of the sea crashing against the headland upon which the fortress sits. The poem draws upon this setting, rendering it in the most stately of terms, and contrasting its natural grandeur with the human camaraderie sponsored within by a lord worthy of the nobility of the place. It is a remarkable eulogy of an early medieval Welsh court and its lord.<sup>1</sup>

Five hundred years later, technology and trade had introduced architecture worthy of note, furniture, tableware, elaborate methods of food preparation and self-conscious refinement of aristocratic manners into Wales. There are far more objects to which Iolo Goch can turn his attention when he visits Sycharth than there were for the anonymous poet of Dinbych, and it is overwhelmingly the constructed, the imported and the cultural that excite his admiration.<sup>2</sup> Iolo's delight in the material wealth on display in the construction and furnishing of the house speaks, of course, to the availability of domestic comforts and prestige goods that were unknown to ninth-century Wales. It also reflects the new circumstances in which bards practised their craft in the fourteenth century: the patrons of the bards no longer inhabited the purely heroic and entirely masculine world of which the headland fortress had been an apt symbol. Those warrior princes had been replaced as patrons of the bards by an ambitious and aspiring class of gentlemen, the *uchelwyr*, whose wives were



important partners in their efforts to advance their positions in a hybrid Welsh/English society. They built houses as imposing as they could afford, and drew their sense of self to a very significant extent from those houses. Thus it is hardly surprising that for a bard seeking to win his patron's favour through well-wrought praise, the house might serve as a meaningful metonym of that patron, and indeed, as Dafydd Johnston has shown, the praise of the patron's house is a distinct category of praise poem among the poets who served these gentlemen, the *beirdd yr uchelwyr*.<sup>3</sup>

The poetry of place, then, is indeed a traditional poetic mode in Welsh literature, but it is not constrained by conventions of theme and image. It is, rather, like a musical form that can accommodate a virtually unlimited variety of instruments, melodies, tempos and harmonies. Its preoccupations and its forms changed significantly over time, and yet the habit of praising splendid dwelling-places remained a deep seam in the terrain of the Welsh poetic tradition.

From the period between the composition of the anonymous 'Edmyg Dinbych' and that of Iolo Goch's paean to the lord and lady of Sycharth, three poems focusing on ecclesiastical foundations introduce yet another note into the Welsh poetry of place. Titled in their manuscript sources 'Canu i Ddewi', 'Canu i Gadfan' and 'Canu i Dysilio', these *awdlau* can be thought of as in one sense eulogies of the founders of three of the most important *clasau*, or early monastic churches, in Wales – Saints David, Cadfan and Tysilio. And so they are; instead of the heroic epithets and accounts of martial success with which princes were praised by their poets, these poems incorporate as terms of praise allusions to some of the remarkable adventures and miracles for which the saints were known, and thus they serve as hagiographies of a sort. But the praise of a saint could not be accommodated entirely within the genre of *molawd*, or eulogy, since that genre concerned itself with the praise of a living prince or lord, while *marwnad* dealt with the death of the patron. An ordinary patron was at any given moment either alive or dead, but a saint occupied time differently. The sixth-century monastic founders who were the saints of the early Welsh church had died to this world long before poets of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries celebrated them, but were, of course, very much alive in the spirit, interceding with God for their devotees and protecting the churches they had founded. The distinctive nature of a saint's life demanded a reworking of conventional bardic genres, and the tradition of the praise of place proved to be a useful instrument in that process. For it was precisely in his *clas* – in the sense both of the physical space of the monastic enclosure and its buildings, and of the community of clerics who at any given moment lived and worked there, claiming the saint as not only their historical founder but also their living head – that the saint was most palpably alive.

The *clas* constituted sacred space in a number of different ways. It was the site of sacred work – liturgy, prayer and study. By virtue of these activities, it

was of the spiritual realm of heaven as well as of the human social and political realm; that dual nature of both the built space of the monastery and the ground in which it was situated allowed it to be a place of sanctuary from the political world of men that surrounded it and a desirable final resting place, almost like being interred in heaven itself. And it was where the saint, although enjoying the bliss of eternal life in heaven, was simultaneously still present on earth in the person of his successor, the abbot.

The three *Gogynfeirdd* poems to the saints have been read by other critics as relatively uncomplicated eulogies of the abbots presiding over the various *clasau* at the times of their composition, and, of course, it was almost certainly those abbots who compensated the poets for the poems. I would argue, though, that we best understand the choice of all three poets to focus their praise on places associated with both these abbots and the founding saints whose successors they were, by reading praise of place as a way of dissolving the distinction between praise of the living and praise of the dead, by rendering sacred space as a site wherein the ancestors and their living avatars can be present simultaneously. Nor is this consolidation of different times within a single space exclusive to poems that centre on ecclesiastical sites; ‘Edmyg Dinbych’ celebrates the hospitality of the recently deceased lord, called in the poem Bleiddudd, while expressing the hope that it will serve as a model for his successor, the ‘great-grandson of Owain’.<sup>4</sup> In other words, whether the eulogized site was a secular dwelling-place or an ecclesiastical foundation, praise of place in Welsh tradition was closely associated with the praise of persons, and could serve to bring persons of different epochs into the single plane of a built site.

The poems surveyed thus far, spanning the period from the ninth through to the fourteenth century, provide a context within which to examine a group of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century poems that constitute a kind of subset or offshoot of this genre or mode: poems in praise of the large and elaborate roods, or crucifixes, that were suspended in the chancel arches, or mounted on the rood screens, of substantial British churches, and some quite small churches as well, from the mid-thirteenth century onwards. These are, in one respect at least, poems about objects, but objects closely associated with the churches in which they reside, in the same way that the sea is associated with Bleiddudd’s court at Tenby, and coupled beams with Owain’s at Sycharth.

In his fine essay on *Welsh Poetry and English Pilgrimage*, Barry Lewis provides a list of ten poems focused on the rood of St John’s Church in Chester.<sup>5</sup> There are also poems to the roods of Brecon, Carmarthen, Llan-faes, Llangynwyd, Llanrwst, Rhuddlan, Tremeirchion and Trefeglwys among the surviving verse of the fourteenth-, fifteenth-, and sixteenth-century *cywyddwyr*.<sup>6</sup> The rood poems centre on images of the crucified Christ that were both startling and impressive to the medieval churchgoer, particularly as they first began to be installed, in the thirteenth century.<sup>7</sup> The roods simultaneously emerged from and fed the

growing devotion to the human Christ in his suffering that was introduced and spread throughout Europe by the Franciscans: they were realistic in ways that had not been characteristic of earlier ecclesiastical art, graphic in their representation of Jesus' bloody wounds and distended body. They were also quite large, often life-sized. And whether mounted upon a rood screen or suspended from the ceiling, they were positioned at the point where nave meets chancel, separating the space in which laypeople congregated from the inner sanctum in which the clergy of the church conducted the sacred mysteries of the Mass. This position intensified the aura of divine power associated with the redemptive suffering of Christ's Passion and death. All of these features of a church rood contributed to its impact on the Christian viewer, inevitably rendering notable the church in which it was housed. So we might expect the rood poems to participate in the larger tradition of the praise of place, and so to offer modern readers the opportunity to participate in the contemporary response to the architecture and setting of the churches in the expanding towns and cities of post-conquest Wales, especially since the two dozen or so rood poems comprise most of the poetry that alludes to these churches. Yet, as we shall see, the rood poems belong for the most part not so much to the tradition of praise of place as to an equally deep-rooted tradition of Welsh devotional poetry, and this stands in the way, as it were, of their function as poems in praise of place.<sup>8</sup> With one notable exception: Gruffudd ap Maredudd ap Dafydd's *awdl* to the rood in St John's Church, Chester, one of the earliest of the surviving rood poems, is simultaneously a celebration of the power of Christ's cross and of the rood in which it is represented, and of the wealth of the city of Chester, which brings such wonders within the experience of an Anglesey bard.

Most fifteenth-century rood poems are prayers, rather than praise poems. Guto'r Glyn's *awdl* on the *crog o Gaer*, the Cross of Chester, is representative. We would not recognize it as a poem about a specific image were it not for the opening couplet:

Y Grog i bob dyn o gred

O dre Gaer a dry gward.<sup>9</sup>

The Cross of the town of Chester imparts salvation to everyone of faith. For the rest, it is a meditation on the sufferings of Christ represented in the crucifix, rather than a description of the artefact itself:

Doe 'dd wylais am dy dolur,

Dy fron, a'th goron, a'th gur,<sup>10</sup>

Yesterday I wept for your suffering, your breast, and your crown, and your anguish.

And from about the midpoint, it is a prayer to Christ and the saints that begins: Goddef ydd wyf a gweiddi,

Y grog un Duw fyw, gwranddo fi!<sup>11</sup>

I am suffering and crying out to the cross of the one living God – hear me!

The poems of Ieuan Brydydd Hir to the Chester cross, similarly, meditate on the material image of the crucified Christ as a means to summon up a mental image that will in turn evoke contrition; it is above all *llun Gŵr a'i gorff yn llawn gwaed*, 'an image of the Lord with his body all bloody'.<sup>12</sup>

In the sixteenth-century *cywydd* on the rood of Brecon by Siôn Ceri, there is a greater sense of the distinction between the rood as object and the suffering person of Christ that it is meant to make present to the devout:

A fu lun a foliannwyd

Yn nes i lun Iesu lwyd?<sup>13</sup>

Was there ever an image praised nearly so much as the image of blessed Jesus?

Yet the emphasis is still on the historical reality that lies beyond the image:

Ac er cyfoeth, Gŵr cyfiawn,

Godlawd wyd a gwaedlyd iawn.<sup>14</sup>

And despite might, righteous Lord, you are rather poor, and bleeding badly.

These devotional poems speak to the role of the roods as objects of pilgrimage, rather than objects of art, the role about which Barry Lewis has written extensively.<sup>15</sup> The *awdl* to the rood of Chester by Gruffudd ap Maredudd ap Dafydd, perhaps the earliest of the rood poems, however, is different from the later iterations of the genre. Gruffudd's poem does, as Lewis has observed, point beyond the rood in the church to the True Cross that it represents in a 'threefold elision' of 'the Rood of Chester . . . the True Cross on which Christ suffered . . . and . . . Christ himself'.<sup>16</sup> And it serves, to quote Lewis again, 'as the centrepiece of his devotions'.<sup>17</sup> In this respect, it is a devotional poem like the later rood poems.

There is in addition, though, a subtextual preoccupation with wealth that bespeaks the poet's response to the city of Chester and to the prosperity that makes the presence of such a splendid rood possible. On the surface level Gruffudd subscribes fully to the legend that the Chester rood arrived miraculously in the Dee estuary, crossing the sea from Ireland.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, he refers to this tradition repeatedly throughout his long *awdl* of 210 lines.<sup>19</sup> The language of the poem, meanwhile, reflects an admiration of the riches concentrated in a thriving town. This is a feature of the weft of the text, so to speak; it operates entirely on the lexical level, while on the level of syntax Gruffudd is entirely concerned with praise of the Cross and its powers.

The poem is shot through with gold. The rood is described as gilded: it is literally golden, the 'gold-coloured sign of the Lord of Hosts' (*eurlliw arwydd Iôr llaweredd*, line 30), the 'golden sign of Mary's Son' (*awr arwydd Mab Mair*, line 77), the 'image of [God's] supreme son, full of gold and precious stones' (*llun ei orau mab, llawn aur a main*, line 152), and 'a fair cross under the golden image

of Christ' (*croes deg dan eurddelw Crist*, line 202).<sup>20</sup> Metaphorically, the rood is 'a golden crown' (*coron euraid*, line 12), perhaps in the sense that it crowns the splendour of the city, 'fair golden Chester' (*Caer deg eurog*, line 11). Not only the substance of the rood, but also its reputation, is golden (*eurglod*, line 57).

The golden glow in which the rood and the town of Chester are bathed is intensified by numerous instances of the *aur/eur-* (gold, golden) root throughout the poem in a variety of applications. In referring to the *Inventio Crucis*, the search for the True Cross by Helena, mother of the Emperor Constantine, Gruffudd describes it as a 'golden quest' (*awr hawl*, line 84). Alluding to the legend of the *Origo Crucis*, the story of the fashioning of the True Cross from wood of three trees that have grown from three seeds of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, he describes these as coming from the 'golden core of a fruit' (*awr ceudod ffrywth*, line 119). In a cryptic line that alludes to an episode later in the origin tale, when Moses comes upon the three young trees during the wanderings of the Israelites in the desert, he claims either that Moses gilded the Cross (or its wood) or that it in some figurative sense 'gilded' him (*Coelfain Elen eurai Foesen ar ei fysedd*, line 9).<sup>21</sup> Further on, God is said to have 'gilded' the cross (*Duw a'i goreurodd*, line 156). And God 'gilds the redemption' of his people (*euro gward*, line 106).

The Christ of this poem is not the suffering figure of the later rood poems, but the heroic saviour of his people. Likewise, God is the reigning king of the heavenly realm. These images afford opportunities for further use of *aur/eur-* words in the terms that refer to God. He is the 'lord of heaven of the golden sword' (*cun nef eurgledd*, line 14), a lord with a 'golden hand' (*euraid adaf*, line 66) and he rules a golden kingdom (*euraid gyfoeth*, line 32), whose denizens are a golden assembly (*aur gynhadledd*, line 35). The crucified Christ is the 'golden pillar of the host' (*eurllorf torf*, line 97), 'heaven's golden majesty' (*aur fawredd Geli*, line 134) and a 'golden leader' (*euorg llyw*, line 138). In an image in which heaven and the Chester church where the rood is housed coalesce, he is *cor lôr eurdrefnad* (line 141), which seems to mean something like 'Lord of the gold-worked chancel'.<sup>22</sup>

A golden radiance infuses Gruffudd ap Maredudd's *awdl* to the rood of Chester. He might be said to speak literally when he describes his poem (as well as the prayerful praise of all Christendom) as 'golden discourse' (*awraraith*, line 112).

Even when the language of the poem does not refer explicitly to 'gold', it persistently invokes the idea of riches. The rood is a 'most precious image, which I praise for its richness' (*delw werthforaf a glodforaf o gludfawredd*, line 23)<sup>23</sup> and the 'treasure of the chancel' (*[t]rysor côr*, line 41). Again, as the poem draws to its conclusion, the rood is referred to as a 'valuable relic' (*[c]rair gwerthfawr*, line 205). The heroic Christ with whom Gruffudd identifies the image on the rood serves as the 'door of a fine wealthy chancel' (*dôr côr coeth*

*cyfoeth*, line 95) and the ‘valuable golden pillar of the host’ (*gwerthfawr eurlloftorf*, line 97). God is *dewin rheufedd*, ‘wealthy wise one’ (line 25) and the ‘God of good treasures’ (*Duw da farant*, line 34).<sup>24</sup> One of the most striking collocations, describing Christ as redeemer, is *gwirion goludog*, ‘the rich innocent’ (line 99), which pairs a word that denotes truth, purity and sinlessness with one that typically references wealth in its most worldly sense. That word occurs again in line 125, which describes Christ’s gifts as *rhoddion goludog* (rich gifts).

The golden, shining wealth of Chester, embodied in the rood and the chancel at whose entrance it stands, suffuses the vocabulary of Gruffudd’s *awdl*. It is the language of the poem, once again, the words deployed in its metaphors and terms of praise, that expands the scope of the golden glow of the rood to permeate the town. The city is mentioned by name nearly a dozen times. In the first instance of this, it is, as has already been noted, ‘fair golden Chester’ (*Caer deg eurog*, line 11). It is also ‘bright and shining Chester’ (*Caer glaer egluraf*, line 82), ‘fine sparkling Chester’ (*[g]loyw Gaer goeth*, line 164), ‘brilliant and fair Chester’ (*[g]oleu Gaer deg*, line 182), and the ‘blessed town of Lleon’ (*[L]leon wendref*, line 131). It is named again in lines 33 (*[C]aerlleon*), 177 (*Caer*), 194 (*[C]aer*), 198 (*[C]aerlleon*), 204 (*[C] aer*), and 210 (*Caer*).

In addition to these explicit references to the city of Chester, Gruffudd evokes the built environment of a town through the use of a variety of terms denoting structures of various sorts. Like the language of gold and the language of wealth, this vocabulary of buildings makes architecture insistently present to the texture of the poem. *Côr*, ‘chancel’, appears more often than any other structural term (at lines 1, 11, 25, 42, 90, 95, 129, 151, 177 and 210). The usage is literal: the rood is suspended in, or mounted on a screen at the entrance to, the chancel of the Church of St John the Baptist.<sup>25</sup> By repeatedly referencing the physical placement of the rood, Gruffudd makes the church in which the cross resides present to a degree unparalleled in any of the other Welsh rood poems. The *côr*, or chancel, is simultaneously the actual and immediate home of the rood, a sacred space that makes the kingdom of heaven present on earth, and a metonym for the physical structure of the church. The multiple references to the chancel remind the audience of the building that houses the rood, and combine with the multiple references to Chester to situate that church within a town. Other structure words enlarge the picture.

These other words, however, do not, at the surface of the poem, reference buildings in Chester, although Chester itself is described as a ‘court of fair bardic utterance’ (*[l]lys lwys farddlef*, line 131). As is the case in that example, the words evoking the built environment occur in metaphors. God is the chieftain of a ‘flourishing court’ (*[l]lys wyrennig*, line 5), for example. Heaven is the ‘dwelling of a fair lord’ (*[l]lwyswawr annedd*, line 5), the ‘homestead of the tribe of Adam’s offspring’ (*tyddyn llwyth plant Addaf*, line 64), and the ‘court of Paradise’ (*[l]lys Baradwys*, line 160). In the most unusual of these conceits, the

sea is described as the ‘most fair courts of the blue currents’ (*[p]rifdeg lysoedd ffrydau gleision*, line 88). The *llysoedd* or ‘courts’ of Welsh princes, which provide the underlying image in several of these metaphors, were never ‘urban’ in the way that Norman castles served as nuclei around which towns grew.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, they constituted clusters of buildings: in some law texts, nine buildings are stipulated for a properly constructed *llys*.<sup>27</sup> Imagined in this way as suitably splendid residences for princes, the *llysoedd* found their way into the vocabulary of eulogy among the *beirdd y tywysogion*, the poets of the princes. And while those princely courts were gone when Gruffudd ap Maredudd was composing his verse in the second half of the fourteenth century, the idea of the *llys* resonated in the poetry of the age of the princes, poetry that Gruffudd knew and emulated, as will be shown below. The *llys* evoked for him an image of clustered buildings intended from the outset to constitute a meaningful whole, and in that sense figured the city.

Another arresting phrase describes the cross itself – in this case, as elsewhere, simultaneously the Chester rood and the actual cross on which Christ was crucified<sup>28</sup> – as *[m]aerdy gratia* (line 3), which Barry Lewis renders as ‘a farmstead of grace’ in his English translation of the poem and as *hafoty [lle y dosrennir] gras* in the Modern Welsh paraphrase that accompanies his edition.<sup>29</sup> In Middle Welsh, according to *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru*, *maerdy* describes a farmhouse, dairy, or a dwelling in the summer pasturelands (GPC 2312a). It is in this sense that the metaphor makes the best sense; as Lewis notes, it suggests the fertility of the grace that derives from the cross.<sup>30</sup> But GPC also suggests the possibility that *maerdy* is the equivalent of *maerdref*, ‘land supervised by a reeve or steward’. In the laws, *maerdref* describes another type of built settlement, situated near the *llys* and comprising, among other structures, houses, barns, a kiln, a smithy and kitchens.<sup>31</sup> Whether or not *maerdy* was synonymous with *maerdref* in Gruffudd’s day, it is not unlikely that the former word would have suggested the latter one to a listener’s ear, as indeed it would have evoked *maer*, the term for a principal official that was beginning to have particular associations with the town, as it had with the *maerdref*. *Maerdrefi* were not only settlements vaguely reminiscent of towns. They were in some cases the actual matrices in which urban development began in native Wales in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Among such *maerdref*-driven towns was Llan-faes, in Gruffudd’s native Anglesey, although this town was suppressed by Edward I when he established the town of Beaumaris in 1295, well before Gruffudd’s time.<sup>32</sup>

Apart from the two last-mentioned phrases, *[p]rifdeg lysoedd ffrydau gleision* and *[m]aerdy gratia*, the metaphors involving words that reference buildings are unremarkable, and any one of them might appear in a secular eulogy or devotional poem. Multiplied as they are, though, and in the context of a composition that focuses explicitly on Chester, these images contribute further to the urban texture of the poem that is woven into its diction.



It is to a considerable extent the conventions of *Gogynfeirdd* verse that enable the effect that I have been describing here. Gruffudd ap Maredudd is often and appropriately described as one of the last of the *Gogynfeirdd*, the poets of the Welsh princes, even though he was a contemporary of Dafydd ap Gwilym, born into a century that knew no native Welsh prince. All of his surviving poems employ the *awdl* and *englyn* measures that the *beirdd y tywysogion* had used for their eulogies of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century princes, rather than the *cywydd* that came to dominate Welsh strict-metre poetry in the fourteenth century. Barry Lewis has aptly described his *awdl* to the rood of Chester as *cerdd sylfaenol Ogyrfarddol*, ‘a fundamentally “Gogynfarddol” poem’.<sup>33</sup> In it, Gruffudd deploys familiar features of earlier Welsh bardic poetry in ways that express not only his devotion to the Cross, but also the fascination that the city of Chester holds for him as well. One of these features is a looseness of overall structure that resists the listener or reader seeking to identify a logical or thematic organization in the poem as a whole, and that privileges instead the individual line, and indeed the individual phrase, as it presents itself to the ear. This quality of the verse renders the texture of the poem’s vocabulary as resonant as its argument. The syntax of *Gogynfeirdd* poetry also lends itself to the build-up of the lexical texture of the poem: the clause with a conjugated verb is a relatively rare feature, while metaphorically descriptive terms of praise employing a bewildering variety of adjectives and genitival constructions abound. One example of these effects occurs in line 7, amidst a string of celebratory phrases that stretches over ten lines (3–12). Some of these verbal collocations seem to reference the rood, some the True Cross, some Christ himself, in the kind of ‘threefold elision’ referred to earlier.<sup>34</sup> One of them is *cadair ffair ffydd*. Barry Lewis has translated this as ‘fair throne of the faith’.<sup>35</sup> Yet as he acknowledges in his note on the line, the word *ffair*, a borrowing of English ‘fair’, may be either the noun describing a market, or the adjective, and the ambiguity invites us to read the phrase as referring not only to the beauty and authority of Christ, but to the Church of St John in Chester as the seat of a ‘faith fair’ that parallels the commercial activity of Chester.

It is into such phrases that Gruffudd pours his store of words referring to gold, to material wealth, and to constructed human habitations. And taken as a whole, these words introduce into the poem a fascination with the city as a place in which treasure is concentrated, even as the language of treasure is concentrated in the text of the poem itself. Perhaps the most explicit statement of the attraction that urban wealth holds for the poet is his prayer to the rood that he may obtain the ‘grace of [God’s] sustaining word’ (*rhad o’i borthair*), a phrase which is followed by *rheidiau berthedd*, ‘the necessities of wealth’ (line 15). We might read or hear the latter phrase in apposition to *rhad o’i borthair*; that is, the grace of God’s word is all of the wealth that one needs. Or we might interpret *rhad o’i borthair*, *rheidiau berthedd* as a compound: the poet asks for

both the grace that flows from God's word *and* the riches that he needs. It is of the essence of *Gogynfardd* syntax that neither reading can conclusively displace the other.

I began by suggesting that there is a fundamental connection in the Welsh bardic tradition between the praise of place and the eulogy of one or more persons associated with that place. Most of the Welsh poems focused on roods are devotional and penitential, rather than laudatory; the objects that they celebrate serve principally as vehicles for devotion to a suffering Christ. Thus, we look in vain to these poems for evidence of the poets' responses to the churches, usually urban, to which the roods belonged. Gruffudd ap Maredudd's mid-fourteenth-century poem to the rood of Chester, perhaps the earliest instance of the genre, is another matter. Gruffudd celebrates a heroic Christ, triumphant over sin; the achievement of Helena in recovering the cross on which he was crucified; and the miraculous arrival in Chester of the beautiful image of the crucified Christ that is housed in the Church of St John the Baptist. Although he speaks an occasional prayer for his own well-being (lines 15, 24, 44, 75–6, 173–4, 205), the poet nowhere in this poem reflects upon his sins, unless we count his prayer that he 'will keep in mind the most righteous course' (*i ddaly ynof cof cyfiawnaſ dremyn*, line 63).

Gruffudd is a poet who in other poems meditates as profoundly and graphically as any on the sins he has committed, the inevitability of death, and the pains of hell that he will suffer if he does not obtain the grace for which he prays.<sup>36</sup> In his *awdl* to the rood of Chester, however, he operates in a different mode: he offers a celebratory eulogy of the rood and of the cross that it represents. In this genre, it is appropriate to liken Christ to an heroic lord, as Gruffudd does when he addresses him as 'lord of heaven of the golden sword' (*cun nef eurgledd*, line 14), 'door of the splendid chancel' (*dôr côr ceinmyg*, line 25), and 'proud and living chosen hawk' (*detholwalch balch byw*, line 46). Like a secular patron, Christ is also celebrated for his noble lineage. He is said to be 'of a maiden queen's lineage, of pure nobility' (*o lin fanon, o lân fonedd*, line 18) and of the 'dignity of David's lineage, most seemly stock' (*urddas llin Dafydd, gŵydd gweddeiddiaſ*, line 68). It is the genre of *molawd*, or eulogy, that creates space for the language of gold and riches that permeates the poem.<sup>37</sup>

Except insofar as it repeatedly references the chancel of the Church of St John and celebrates the rood that adorns it, Gruffudd's *awdl* is neither a eulogy of the Church of St John as an urban structure, nor a poem in praise of a patron such as the dean of that church. It is, rather, a poem in praise of Christ and his cross as a symbol of triumph, and, implicitly, a poem in praise of the city of Chester. It is a eulogy with no identifiable patron, and this fact poses a problem for the critic because, as the editor of the poem has observed, it is difficult to imagine that Gruffudd produced such a long, elaborate and masterful *awdl* without patronage.<sup>38</sup> Christ as triumphant saviour is the poem's object of praise, as in the *awdlau i Dduw* of the *beirdd y tywysogion*,<sup>39</sup> but we have no way

of knowing who, if anyone, compensated Gruffudd for composing it.

The absence from the poem of a human patron concentrates the audience's attention yet more closely on the rood of Chester, the church in which it is housed, and the city of Chester itself. Although the city and its wealth have only a diffuse presence in the poem, a presence produced entirely by Gruffudd's choice of words, Chester emerges from that cloud of language to play a prominent role in the text as it is experienced by auditor or reader. This strategy allows Gruffudd to celebrate Chester without engaging any of several potentially discomfiting facts about the town. Chester lay outside of Wales as Wales had been demarcated in the settlement that followed the Edwardian Conquest of 1282, and in fact, despite the natural geographical connection between Wales and Chester that drew the Welsh as well as the English of Flintshire to its markets and its pilgrimage sites, the town seems never to have been regarded by the Welsh as part of Wales.<sup>40</sup> In addition, Chester's function in Gruffudd's day as the administrative and juridical centre for Flintshire rendered it both a symbol of conquest and a place of practical importance. Indeed, Chester could have been read as a symbol of oppression from as far back as 1070, when William the Conqueror established a castle there. It was one of the principal military bases from which Edward I launched both the 1277 campaign against Llywelyn ap Gruffudd that ended with the humiliating Treaty of Aberconwy and the 1282 campaign that came to a conclusion with the death of Llywelyn and the final conquest of Wales. Finally, the Welsh throughout the Middle Ages had severely limited rights in any of the medieval towns whose markets they frequented, whether in Wales or in England, including Chester. Thus, Chester would have been for Gruffudd ap Maredudd at once familiar and alien, his own and foreign. He acknowledges as much in the names that he employs when situating the rood. He mentions Chester (Caer) recurrently throughout the poem, as we have seen. In only four passages, however, does he explicitly place Chester in England. Most unequivocal are his descriptions of the rood as a 'gift full of grace that has come . . . to sparkling and splendid Chester of the fair land of England' (*rhadlawn ddawn a ddoeth . . . i loyw Gaer goeth o fro Loegr gain*, lines 163–4) and a 'spectacular relic, the radiant gift of a cross to brilliant fair Chester of the land of England' (*olygawd grair, loywged grog, i Loegr dir oleu Gaer deg*, lines 181–2). He exclaims that 'this was a fair gift to receive in England' (*llyna gain goelfain fu gael yn Lloegr*, line 183). The rood is also a 'sign of the golden-famed Lord of the ultimate land' that 'has come to England' (*doddyw nod eurglod lôr gwlad bellaf Lloegr*, lines 57–8) and a 'gift to great fair England' (*anrheg Loegr fawrdeg*, line 70). Elsewhere, Chester is situated in relationship to the River Dee, which visitors from Wales crossed in order to enter the city. The context of the city is local and geographical, rather than national and potentially political. There are just as many references to the Dee as there are to *Lloegr*, England. The rood is acclaimed as the 'very great gift near the River Dee' (*ryfawr goelfain geir Afon*

*Dyfrdwy*, line 115) and said to have arrived on ‘the bank of the Dee’ (*llethfr Dyfrdwy*, line 209). Two of the allusions to the Dee are particularly arresting. In one, the miraculous journey of the rood has brought it ‘by a sea journey on the Dee to the edge of Deira’ (*drwy fordwy Dyfrdwy Deifrdir eithaf*, line 48). The term *Deifr*, or Deira, as a metonym for England neutralizes the political resonance of *Lloegr*, evoking as it does not only the longvanished Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Deira, but the British kingdom of the Old North that preceded it. And Gruffudd first makes mention of the Dee not in connection with England at all, but with the ‘brow of Gwynedd’ (*Dyfrdwy waedddgreg, arial gwaneg ar ael Gwynedd*, line 22). By placing Chester as firmly on the banks of the Dee as in the realm of England, Gruffudd associates the city with Wales, but without making any overt claim to it. He bridges the divide by avoiding any perspective on the city that would have required him to reflect on its political and cultural resonances. One might say, as indeed Gruffudd does, that the rood has come ‘from the court of paradise to lovely Britain’ (*o lys Baradwys i lwys Brydain*, line 160); it is the possession of neither the English nor the Welsh – neither people is named in the poem – but of the island of Britain, which has such tremendous resonance as a cultural concept in the Welsh bardic tradition.

Gruffudd ap Maredudd was not without patriotic feeling. He had lands in Anglesey, and his moving prayer that ‘blessed Gwynedd’ (*wen Wynedd*, line 1), ‘blameless Gwynedd’ (*Gwynedd ddiwarth*, line 20) might be spared the ravages of the plague speaks to his profound attachment to his native land.<sup>41</sup> His principal patrons, the Tudurs of Penmynydd, were powerful in post-conquest Gwynedd by virtue of the lands and offices that they held. One of them, Hywel ap Goronwy, archdeacon of Môn, was the principal architect of a conspiracy to murder the royal attorney for Wales and the subject of an elegy by Gruffudd.<sup>42</sup> His celebration of the rood of Chester could have adopted any of the various tendentious attitudes towards Chester and other towns that have been discerned by Helen Fulton in the poetry of several of the *cywyddwyr*.<sup>43</sup> Instead, in the *awdl* to the rood of Chester, one of the earliest of Welsh poems to engage with the burgeoning urban culture of the fourteenth century, Gruffudd approaches the theme of the city obliquely, and subordinates the praise of place to the praise of God. Yet by so doing, he implicitly renders Chester as a kind of heaven on earth.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>For ‘Edmyg Dinbych’, see R. Geraint Gruffydd, “‘The Praise of Tenby’: a late- ninth-century Welsh court poem”, in Joseph F. Nagy and Leslie Ellen Jones (eds), *Heroic Poets and Poetic Heroes in Celtic Tradition: A Festschrift for Patrick K. Ford*. CSANA Yearbook 3–4 (Dublin, 2005), pp. 91–102 (includes an edition and translation), and idem., ‘*Edmyg Dinbych*’: *Cerdd Lys Gynnar o Ddyfed*. *Darlith goffa J.E. Caerwyn a Gwen Williams 2001* (Aberystwyth, 2002).

<sup>2</sup>For Iolo Goch’s poem in praise of Owain Glyn Dŵr’s court at Sycharth, see

Dafydd Johnston (ed.), *Gwaith Iolo Goch* (Cardiff, 1988), no. 10, or Dafydd Johnston (ed. and trans.), *Iolo Goch: Poems* (Llandysul, 1993), no. 10, pp. 38–43.

<sup>3</sup>Dafydd Johnston, *Llên yr Uchelwyr: Hanes Beirniadol Llenyddiaeth Gymraeg 1300–1525* (Cardiff, 2005), pp. 181–6.

<sup>4</sup>See Gruffydd, “The Praise of Tenby’,” pp. 92–5, and lines 14–18, 29–32, 35–8, and 54–8 of the poem, pp. 96–9.

<sup>5</sup>Barry J. Lewis, *Welsh Poetry and English Pilgrimage: Gruffudd ap Maredudd and the Rood of Chester*, Research Papers 23 (Aberystwyth, 2005), pp. 14–15.

<sup>6</sup>On the rood of Brecon, see ‘Y Grog yn Aberhonddu’, no. 12 in M. Paul Bryant-Quinn (ed.), *Gwaith Ieuan Brydydd Hir* (Aberystwyth, 2000), pp. 65–70; ‘Grog Aberhodni’, no. 54 in A. Cynfael Lake (ed.), *Gwaith Siôn Ceri* (Aberystwyth, 1996), pp. 65–70; poems 44 and 51 in Leslie Harries (ed.), *Gwaith Huw Cae Llwyd ac Eraill* (Cardiff, 1953). The poem to the rood of Carmarthen is attributed to Dafydd ap Gwilym, and the surviving text in the Hendregadredd Manuscript is thought by Daniel Huws to be quite possibly an autograph. See ‘Englynion Dafydd ap Gwilym i’r Grog o Gaer’, in Ann Parry Owen and Dylan Foster Evans (eds), *Gwaith Llywelyn Brydydd Hoddnant, Dafydd ap Gwilym, Hillyn ac Eraill* (Aberystwyth, 1996), no. 4, p. 51; and Daniel Huws, ‘Llawysgrif Hendregadredd’, *National Library of Wales Journal*, 22 (1981–1982), on p. 18. On the roods of Llan-faes and Llangynwyd, see ‘I’r Grog yn Llan-faes’, no. 104, and ‘I’r Grog yn Llangynwyd,’ no. 101, in A. Cynfael Lake (ed.), *Gwaith Lewys Morgannwg II* (Aberystwyth, 2004). See further G. Hartwell Jones, ‘Celtic Britain and the Pilgrim Movement’, *Y Cymmrodor*, 23 (1912), p. 302. On the rood of Llanrwst, see no. 16 in M. Paul Bryant-Quinn (ed.), *Gwaith Ieuan ap Llywelyn Fychan, Ieuan Llwyd Brydydd a Lewys Aled* (Aberystwyth, 2003). On the roods of Rhuddlan and Tremeirchion, see J. C. Morrice (ed.), *Detholiad o Waith Gruffudd ab Ieuan ap Llywelyn Fychan*. Bangor Welsh Manuscripts Society Publication 5 (Bangor, 1910), poems 9 and 15. On the Rood of Trefeglwys, Montgomeryshire, see ‘Y Ddelw o Grist yn Nhrefeglwys’, no. 1 in M. Paul Bryant-Quinn (ed.), *Apocryffa Siôn Cent* (Aberystwyth, 2004), pp. 27–30, and no. 53 in Lake (ed.), *Gwaith Siôn Ceri*, cited above. There is also a poem whose editor believes it to concern a rood in a chapel near Gwenfrewy’s well in Flintshire: ‘I’r Grog’, no. 16 in A. Cynfael Lake (ed.), *Gwaith Siôn ap Hywel* (Aberystwyth, 1999).

<sup>7</sup>There is a very good discussion of the overwhelming effect of roods in medieval Welsh churches in Bryant-Quinn (ed.), *Gwaith Ieuan Brydydd Hir*, pp. 12–17.

<sup>8</sup>On medieval Welsh devotional poetry, see Marged Haycock (ed.), *Blodeugerdd Barddas o Ganu Crefyddol Cynnar* (Swansea, 1994); Catherine McKenna, *The Medieval Welsh Religious Lyric* (Belmont MA, 1991); Johnston, *Llên yr Uchelwyr*, Chapter 8, ‘Y canu crefyddol’, pp. 195–231.

<sup>9</sup>For Williams (ed.), *Gwaith Guto'r Glyn* (Cardiff, 1939), no. 110, pp. 283–4, lines 1–2.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., lines 5–6.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., lines 31–2.

<sup>12</sup>Bryant-Quinn (ed.), *Gwaith Ieuan Brydydd Hir*, no. 11, pp. 63–4.

<sup>13</sup>Lake (ed.), *Gwaith Siôn Ceri*, no. 54, pp. 65–70, lines 15–16.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., lines 21–2.

<sup>15</sup>Lewis, *Welsh Poetry and English Pilgrimage*, cited above, note 5.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>18</sup>On the origin legend of the Chester rood see Lewis, *Welsh Poetry and English Pilgrimage*, pp. 12–13, 15, 17–19,

<sup>19</sup>Lines 19–22, 37–8, 45–8, 69–72, 87–90, 115–18, 121–2, 129–34, 175–210, and *passim*.

<sup>20</sup>All quotations from Barry J. Lewis (ed.), *Gwaith Gruffudd ap Maredudd II: Cerddi Crefyddol*. Cyfres Beirdd yr Uchelwyr 29 (Aberystwyth, 2005), no. 1, pp. 21–33. Translations are my own.

<sup>21</sup>Barry Lewis discusses the syntax of the line and its relationship to traditions of the True Cross in *Gwaith Gruffudd ap Maredudd II*, pp. 114–15.

<sup>22</sup>Lewis discusses the problematic *eurdfrefnad* at pp. 131–2.

<sup>23</sup>Lewis discusses *cludfawredd* at p. 118.

<sup>24</sup>Although *barant* is a problematic word. See Lewis, *Gwaith Gruffudd ap Maredudd II*, p. 120.

<sup>25</sup>Also known from the late thirteenth century as the Church of the Holy Cross. See the discussion of the church in Lewis, *Welsh Poetry and English Pilgrimage*, pp. 22–4.

<sup>26</sup>See R. R. Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence and Change: Wales 1063–1145* (Oxford, 1987; rpt. as *The Age of Conquest: Wales 1063–1145* [Oxford], 1991), p. 167.

<sup>27</sup>Glanville R. J. Jones, 'Llys and *maerdref*', in T. M. Charles-Edwards, Morfydd E. Owen and Paul Russell (eds), *The Welsh King and His Court* (Cardiff, 2000), pp. 296–318, on pp. 296–9.

<sup>28</sup>Barry Lewis discusses the 'elision' of the rood of Chester, the True Cross, and Christ himself in the imagery of this poem. *Welsh Poetry and English Pilgrimage*, p. 8.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 35; *Gwaith Gruffudd ap Maredudd II*, p. 27.

<sup>30</sup>*Gwaith Gruffudd ap Maredudd II*, p. 113.

<sup>31</sup>Jones, 'Llys and *maerdref*', pp. 299–302.

<sup>32</sup>Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence and Change*, pp. 164–5, p. 372.



<sup>33</sup>Lewis, *Gwaith Gruffudd ap Maredudd II*, p. 109. He goes on explain what he means by this phrase: ‘Canwyd hi ar fesurau awdl ac englyn; y mae wedi ei chynganeddu drwyddi, a cheir ynddi ddefnydd helaeth o gymeriad. Gogynfarddol yw naws ei hieithwedd hefyd: y prinder berfau rhediadol, y cyfansoddeiriau lu, y mynych enghreifftiau o roi enw genidol neu ansoddair o flaen yr enw a oleddfa, yr ansicrwydd o ran ymhle y mae brawddeg yn dechrau ac ymhle y mae’n gorffen. Mwy sylfaenol fyth na’r rhain oll yw adeiledd Gogynfarddol y gerdd – neu efallai y byddai “diffyg adeiledd” yn well disgrifiad . . . Crwydro o’r nail ddelwedd i’r llall a wna hon [yr awdl i’r grog o Gaer], heb fod unrhyw wahaniaeth i’w weld rhwng cynnwys y gwahanol ganiadau’ (pp. 109–10) [‘It is composed in the metres of *awdl* and *englyn*; there is *cynghanedd* throughout, and a generous use of *cymeriad*. The nature of its linguistic style is also that of a *Gogynfardd*: the scarcity of conjugated verbs, the host of compound words, the frequent examples of putting a genitive noun or adjective before the noun which it modifies, the uncertainty regarding where the sentence begins and ends. Even more significant than all this is the *Gogynfarddol* structure of the poem – or perhaps ‘lack of structure’ would be a better description . . . The poem wanders from one image to another without making any distinction between the content of the different verses.’]

<sup>34</sup>See above, n. 28.

<sup>35</sup>Lewis, *Welsh Poetry and English Pilgrimage*, p. 35. In the paraphrase that accompanies his edition, he offers a similar interpretation: *gorsedd deg [y] ffydd*. See *Gwaith Gruffudd ap Maredudd II*, p. 27.

<sup>36</sup>See Lewis, *Gwaith Gruffudd ap Maredudd II*, poems 2 (pp. 34–8), 3 (pp. 39–54) 5 (pp. 59–60), and 15 (pp. 91–107).

<sup>37</sup>Not to mention silver. Line 1 refers to the ‘chancel of silverwork’ (*côr arianwaith*) and line 146 to Christ’s ‘silver breastplate’ (*llurig arian*).

<sup>38</sup>Lewis, *Welsh Poetry and English Pilgrimage*, p. 21.

<sup>39</sup>On praise of God as a genre practised by the *beirdd y tywysogion*, see McKenna, *The Medieval Welsh Religious Lyric*, pp. 13–30.

<sup>40</sup>Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence and Change*, p. 16.

<sup>41</sup>Lewis, *Gwaith Gruffudd ap Maredudd II*, poem 8, pp. 68–70.

<sup>42</sup>Barry J. Lewis (ed.), *Gwaith Gruffudd ap Maredudd I: Canu i Deulu Penmynydd*. Cyfres Beirdd yr Uchelwyr 24 (Aberystwyth, 2003), poem 1, pp. 23–5. On the rebellious behaviour of Master Hywel ap Goronwy, see Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence and Change*, p. 411, p. 441.

<sup>43</sup>See Helen Fulton, ‘Trading places: representations of urban culture in medieval Welsh poetry’, *Studia Celtica*, 31 (1997), 219–30; and idem, ‘The outside within: medieval Chester and north Wales as a social space’, in Catherine A. Clarke (ed.), *Mapping the Medieval City: Space, Place and Identity in Chester, c. 1200–1600* (Cardiff, 2011), pp. 149–68.



## Fairs, Feast-Days and Carnival in Medieval Wales: Some Poetic Evidence

Helen Fulton

In an article on festive misrule in early modern France, the historian Natalie Zemon Davis argued that ‘festive life can on the one hand perpetuate certain values of the community, even guarantee its survival, and on the other hand, criticize political order. Misrule can have its own rigour and can also decipher king and state.’<sup>1</sup> Political criticism, community values, deciphering of king and state – these are useful identifiers for the festive activities which lie embedded in medieval Welsh poetry.

The large corpus of Welsh poetry composed in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, mainly in the *cywydd* and *awdl* metres, is usually classified as court poetry since it addresses the class of Welsh gentry, the *uchelwyr*, who emerged as cultural and political leaders after the conquest of north Wales by Edward I in 1284. But among the conventional topics of courtly love, nature poetry, religious devotion and praise-poems to high-status individuals, a strong layer of urban and folk life makes its presence felt. It is here that we can detect elements of carnival and misrule, characterized by binary inversions of high and low, noble and peasant, male and female, religious and secular. In Wales, as elsewhere in Europe, these binaries work to privilege one set of values – high, noble, male, religious – over the other, and therefore to entrench existing power structures. But in medieval Wales there were the additional binaries of English and Welsh, town and country, national and regional, which gave a sharper political edge to any form of resistance, whether carnivalesque or motivated. The Welsh poetic evidence for rituals and cultural practices associated with fairs, feast-days and the custom of the ‘hue and cry’ shows that urban and rural communities performed a variety of festive practices which worked to ‘decipher’ the complex political relationships between towns and estates, English burgesses and Welsh landowners, and the overarching structures of royal authority in Wales which brought leading Welshmen and Englishmen together as part of the same administration.

Most of the evidence for urban rituals and ceremonies which forms the basis of modern historical accounts comes from the large cities and towns of medieval and early modern Europe, including Paris, Rome, Florence and London. With regard to Wales, very little work has been published on medieval folk rituals, making Richard Suggett’s study of the parish saint’s-day feast, or *gwylmabsant*, in early modern Wales all the more significant.<sup>2</sup> Drawing on legal

and historical records, Suggett constructs a persuasive case for interpreting the *gwylmabsant* as an expression of communal identity. Using medieval Welsh poetry as evidence for cultural practice, Jerry Hunter has argued that the Welsh literary genre of the *ymryson*, a poetic debate similar to the Scottish tradition of flyting, can be fitted into the convention of ritualized social inversion which characterizes carnival.<sup>3</sup> Beyond the *ymryson*, the large corpus of medieval Welsh poetry, much of it composed to be performed to a listening audience, provides further significant evidence for a culture of carnival in Wales.

Despite the small size of the Welsh towns – and the relative paucity of historical records – it is still worth asking what kinds of urban or popular rituals were practised among the Welsh in Wales, and how these functioned in a sociopolitical sense. A significant factor is the extent to which urban or folk rituals articulated any cross-status aspect: that is, any aspect or activity which involved not only the populace but also the elites. Both fairs and feast-days, certainly in England, seem to have included a wide spectrum of gentry, citizens and populace, but the evidence for Wales is less secure. However, the issue of cross-status involvement is particularly pertinent in Wales, given that its history of urban development in the medieval period is very much a history of opposition and competition: between individual towns, between urban and manorial interests, and between Welsh and English in many areas.<sup>4</sup> As a result, the function of urban ritual can be associated not only with the power relations between economic classes, but also with those operating among English burgesses, Welsh *uchelwyr* or landowners (some of whom held offices of the crown) and the Welsh in the rural hinterlands who were largely excluded from commercial privileges in the borough towns until the late fourteenth century. While historical evidence for medieval Welsh cultural practices is limited, given that written records were kept by the Norman and English settlers to document their own political and administrative progress, the literary evidence of the native Welsh poets can offer some insights into traditional popular culture.

### *Theories of carnival*

In its strictest sense, carnival, from an earlier Italian form *carnelevale*, ‘the removal of meat’, refers to Shrovetide, the days immediately preceding Ash Wednesday which was the beginning of Lent. However, the characteristic modes of carnival, including the overconsumption of food and drink, disruptive behaviour, masquerade, role reversals and ‘misrule’, were in evidence from the twelve days of Christmas through to Shrove Tuesday, and in fact many of these activities were also used to mark the major folk festivals of early modern Europe, including May-day and midsummer.

In the modern tradition of research relating to urban rituals and traditions, two central paradigms have emerged. The first, typified by Charles Phythian-Adams’s work on Coventry and elaborated more recently by Gervase Rosser, is the paradigm of social cohesion. According to this paradigm, urban myths and

traditions, produced at the grass-roots of folk custom, promoted social cohesion across a range of class and economic interests.<sup>5</sup> Phythian-Adams interpreted the various rituals and ceremonies of latemedieval Coventry as practices which enhanced 'the wholeness of the social order'.<sup>6</sup> Rosser argued that urban myths were 'contested territory' and that 'no one social group could effectively claim a patent on the interpretation of the myth'.<sup>7</sup> In consequence, myths were both an expression of a shared urban identity and texts which could be appropriated and interpreted by different social groups in ways which validated their own place in the urban structure. In his book on carnival and renaissance drama, Michael Bristol contributes to the paradigm of urban ritual as social cohesion when he describes carnival as representing 'a collective determination to preserve the right of the community to set its own standards of behavior and social discipline, and to enforce those standards by appropriate means'.<sup>8</sup>

The second paradigm defines urban ritual as a top-down pressure of social control by the urban elite. Sheila Lindenbaum, for example, argues that the exclusion of many groups, such as women and artisans, from craft guilds and other instruments of urban regulation undermines the concept of communal celebrations based on shared values and traditions. Given the exclusiveness of the urban governing class, urban ceremonies were not 'spontaneous popular celebrations, but customs strictly regulated by the merchant oligarchy'.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Benjamin R. McRee claims, in relation to guild ceremonies in particular, that 'public ceremony could be insidiously divisive, drawing attention to the lines separating different social groups within the community rather than working to erase those lines'.<sup>10</sup>

These two paradigms of urban ritual, social cohesion as opposed to social control, correspond broadly to the distinction made by Mikhail Bakhtin between unofficial and official cultures in early modern Europe. In his book, *Rabelais and his World*, written in 1965 and first published in English in 1968, Bakhtin argued that medieval folk culture existed in a popular sphere of small towns and markets positioned outside the official culture of administration and government. The freedom allowed in the carnival sphere allowed people to experience a non-hierarchical social order which then helped to bring about actual social change. Bakhtinian 'carnival', a term he uses more or less synonymously with 'folk culture', comprised a variety of comic rituals, including pageants, processions, feasts of fools and parish feast-days, which were 'sharply distinct from the serious official, ecclesiastical, feudal, and political cult forms and ceremonials'.<sup>11</sup> For Bakhtin, carnival was characterized by a particular aesthetic which he called 'grotesque realism', signifying exaggerated images of the body and its functions, images that were routinely disallowed in all other spheres of life. Medieval culture therefore had a dual aspect, the unofficial and the official, with the former dismantling the hierarchies which the latter constantly reinstated.

Beyond the paradigms of social cohesion and social control, or unofficial and

official cultures, lies the question of whether or not urban ritual, as a social practice, had the power to effect social change, as Bakhtin argued. Peter Burke, in his book *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, set up another binary opposition by posing the question of whether carnival was about 'social control or social protest', concluding that, while the ruling classes understood the value of carnival as a 'safety valve' in a highly inequitable society, the valve often blew, releasing a violent reaction and 'a "switching" of codes, from the language of ritual to the language of rebellion'.<sup>12</sup> Chris Humphrey further investigated this binary in some detail, citing critical interpretations of carnival as radical social protest on the one hand and conservative 'safety valve' on the other.<sup>13</sup> Rejecting the polarization of theories relating to 'festive misrule', Humphrey prefers to analyse it, in all its forms, as an articulation of 'transgression'. If, as Humphrey argues, all types of carnival activity have in common a transgressive spirit of 'symbolic inversion', breaking boundaries and disrupting power structures, we might assume that its main function was to bring about changes to the social order. Yet there appears to be little evidence for this, and most of the critics cited by Humphrey, including Umberto Eco and Terry Eagleton, support the view that carnival was essentially a form of social control managed from above, an 'authorized transgression' (Eco) or 'a permissible rupture of hegemony' (Eagleton).<sup>14</sup> When the 'safety valve' blew, urban authorities were quick to take charge before any organized and targeted protest movement could be formed.

Setting aside the issue of intentionality – that is, what the revellers thought they were doing or hoped to achieve, if anything – it would seem a matter of political reality that carnivalesque activities or urban rituals at the popular level are unlikely by themselves to effect any significant social change, precisely because they are 'unofficial'. Paradigmatic shifts in the political and social order are achieved primarily through the operations of institutional power, from which carnival, by its nature, was excluded. However, in their important book, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, Peter Stallybrass and Allon White interrogate the apparently 'natural' distinctions between 'high' and 'low' (or official and unofficial) cultures to show that they are co-dependent: 'The low-Other is despised and denied at the level of political organization and social being whilst it is instrumentally constitutive of the shared imaginary repertoires of the dominant culture.'<sup>15</sup> Resisting the essentializing strategy of identifying carnival as intrinsically either radical or conservative, Stallybrass and White argue that carnival may become politically motivated under certain conditions:

The most that can be said in the abstract is that for long periods carnival may be a stable and cyclical ritual with no noticeable politically transformative effects but that, given the presence of sharpened political antagonism, it may often act as *catalyst* and *site of actual and symbolic struggle* . . . The dialectic of antagonism frequently *turned* rituals into resistance at the moment of

intervention by the higher powers, even when no overt oppositional element had been present before.<sup>16</sup>

In other words, carnivalesque rituals of an innocuous annual kind may take on an active political value, declared through violence and resistance, in a context of 'antagonism' that is inevitably managed by the 'mechanisms of cultural hegemony'.<sup>17</sup> As an example of this, Jody L. H. McQuillan has shown that the French genre of the *sottie*, a type of ribald play or farce, exerted a challenge to urban authority that was perceived to be a real political threat to the established order.<sup>18</sup>

Stallybrass and White's discussion opens up another way of reading carnival, not as the product of either official or unofficial cultures, but as a dialectic between a number of groups within the urban context. They refer to carnival as a 'site of actual and symbolic struggle', signifying the competition between dominant and dominated ideologies, between official and unofficial practices, between top-down and (often literally) bottom-up cultural forces. This concept of a 'site of [ideological] struggle', coined by Louis Althusser, was developed by Stuart Hall in relation to his theory of ideology as a practice, 'generated, produced and reproduced in specific settings (sites) – especially, in the apparatuses of ideological production which “produce” social meanings and distribute them throughout society.'<sup>19</sup> For Hall, cultural practices are definitive sites of ideological struggle, articulating meanings and negotiating relations between discourse and experience, between domination and resistance. We can define 'carnival' generically as the ritualized and parodic performance of social inversion which destabilizes (but cannot entirely dismantle) the experiential boundaries between 'high' and 'low' and offers discursive resistance to dominant ideologies, often at the level of the political unconscious.<sup>20</sup> The subjects interpellated by carnival – that is, the participants discursively constructed by the language of ritual celebration – are not simply the victims of an ideological 'false consciousness'. They are not passively manipulated by the power of the elite but themselves contribute actively to bringing into being the carnival experience and defining it through their performance of it. Yet, in its very inversion of the social order, carnival works to reproduce the status quo, the 'natural' order. To constitute an effective challenge to the status quo, resistance has to be supported by at least one sector within the official or authorized culture of political power. Carnival on its own, then, can never produce the kind of social protest necessary to effect social change, apart from increased repression by the official culture of the state.

Carnival as a site of ideological resistance, comic inversion and the aesthetic of grotesque realism is a useful framework for considering the evidence of popular ritual and folk humour found in Welsh poetry of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In these centuries, the full impact of English conquest and urbanization after 1282 intersected with the political rebellion mounted by Owain Glyn Dŵr between 1400 and 1415. For the most part, the poets

themselves represented institutional power as members of the *uchelwyr*, the Welsh gentry who, together with some of the ruling English, were their patrons and audience. Typically, therefore, they depict folk ritual as inherently humorous and harmless, a normative 'safety valve' which serves only to reiterate the power structures of urban life, itself securely distanced from the landed estates of the Welsh and English nobilities. But as political factionalism increased during the fifteenth century, the Welsh poets began to reinterpret rituals of entertainment as rituals of resistance and rebellion, a more overtly political response which could only emanate from the official culture of Welsh court poetry. The Welsh evidence demonstrates the potential power of urban ritual to become politicized as part of a power struggle, not between higher and lower orders, but between competing elites.

### *Fairs, feast-days and carnival humour*

Throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, despite their uneasy relationship with the English-dominated towns, the Welsh managed to participate in urban life, both in their own towns and, to varying degrees, in the English towns (as Matthew Stevens demonstrates, in Chapter 6 of this book). By the fifteenth century, Welsh court poets were composing praise poems to urban officials and churchmen, both English and Welsh, and were extolling the virtues of borough towns such as Oswestry as havens of consumer culture.<sup>21</sup> The origins of many Welsh towns as English settlements had not been entirely forgotten even in the fourteenth century, while the anti-Welsh legislation enacted by the Crown in the wake of the Glyn Dŵr rebellion was a sharp reminder to the Welsh that their access to urban culture was contingent and mediated. Yet the commercial significance of the towns made it imperative for the Welsh to engage with them.

Given the complications associated with the borough towns and their markets, from the Welsh point of view, it is not surprising that fairs were a popular alternative for the Welsh as trading places. The evidence of the poetry confirms the centrality of fairs, in contrast to the relative insignificance of towns, to the seasonal life of a largely rural Welsh population. Poetic references to fairs are invariably placed in humorous contexts, with the implication that folk life is itself a natural focus of humour and parody, constructing an elite subjectivity. This is intensified by the role reversal implicit in the poetic persona who is often constructed as a product of folk culture, creating a comic inversion of status in which the highly qualified professional bard, more than likely a member of the *uchelwyr* (or gentry), casts himself in the role of an itinerant trader or agricultural worker. In another type of inversion, the poet takes on the persona of an upwardly mobile squire whose pretensions to nobility are rudely exposed by the demotic urban culture in which he finds himself. At a broad political level, the many poetic appropriations of fairs and feast-days as part of native Welsh culture exert a form of resistance to the English domination of urban commerce.

In north Wales, the native Welsh before the Edwardian conquest had paid to trade only at fairs, not at the markets owned by the native princes.<sup>22</sup> The imposition of market tolls in the English boroughs therefore seemed a gross infringement of their former rights by the conquering power, whereas their access to the fairs, where they could trade for the same outlay as everyone else, continued as before. It was not surprising, then, that the Welshmen of north Wales felt at home at the fairs, but took every opportunity to evade the market tolls of the English boroughs by trading *in patria* as much as possible (that is, amongst themselves in small villages and hamlets) or by patronizing Welsh rather than English boroughs, such as the inhabitants of Anglesey who went out of their way to trade at Newborough rather than Beaumaris because the former had a majority of Welsh burgesses.<sup>23</sup> Trading *in patria* in small staples such as milk, butter and cheese was specifically allowed, and we find references in medieval poetry to *cawsai*, ‘cheese-pedlar’, and *blotai*, ‘flour-pedlar’, meaning mendicants who traded in these commodities. Dafydd ap Gwilym (*fl.*c.1320–70), for example, describes the ideal place for a meeting with his beloved as a place where there is no *blotai neu gawsai goesir*, ‘no long-legged flour-beggar or cheese-beggar’, to interrupt their tryst.<sup>24</sup> In a biting satire on *gwrach*, ‘old woman’, Madawg Dwygraig (*fl.*1370–80) uses the phrase *gwrach flotai*, meaning an old woman dealing in flour, one of the many women who made their livings as itinerant pedlars and hucksters, travelling around the villages and fairs.<sup>25</sup>

Throughout England and Wales, fairs were notoriously the sites of civil disturbance and violence, exacerbated no doubt by the combined factors of valuable commodities, cash and large amounts of alcohol.<sup>26</sup> Many of the Welsh poems refer to heavy drinking at fairs and other festival celebrations. In the sole surviving poem of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn Llwyd (*fl.* fourteenth century), an *awdl* in which the poet confesses his sins to God, he includes in the list his misbehaviour at fairs, including drunkenness and fraud using false weights to measure out the goods to be sold:

Fy nrygfedd-dawd,anhoff arawdyn y ffeiriau,

Fy ngham fesur,brad ac usur,bryder gwysau.<sup>27</sup>

My evil drunkenness, hateful speech in the fairs, my false measure, deceit and usury, injuries causing distress.

A significant reason why fairs were a focus of disorderly conduct was that they were invariably held on the feast-days of the liturgical calendar, days which were holidays from the regular round of manual labour. Most towns held fairs on the feast-day of their patron saint,<sup>28</sup> and the most popular time for fairs was during the months of May through to October or November. Throughout Wales and England, the annual cycle of liturgical feasts, together with some seasonal holidays such as Lammass Day or ‘Gwyl Awst’ on 1 August, the first day of autumn, formed the rhythm of a ritual year based largely on the demands of an agricultural economy. Medieval Welsh poetry contains many references to these



feast-days, primarily as a type of calendar, a way of noting the passing of time. An anonymous poem in the *cywydd* metre, probably of the fifteenth century, retells the fable of the ant and the grasshopper, using feast-days as markers of the passing seasons, summer to winter, with the feckless grasshopper leaping and jumping from ‘Gwyl Ieuan yn yr haf’, that is, the feast of St John the Baptist on 24 June, which was also midsummer’s day, to ‘Gwyl yr Hollsaint’, All Saints’ Day, on 1 November, the beginning of winter.<sup>29</sup>

Quite regularly in the poetry, the authorial subject is located in this distinctive culture of markets and fairs, humorously represented as carnivalesque in the Bakhtinian sense of ‘grotesque realism’. In one of the Dafydd ap Gwilym poems, the rejected lover laments that he is made to look like a goat at a summer fair:

Ni fyn merch, er ei pherchi,  
‘Ngolud oedd, fy ngweled i  
Mwy no phei rhoid mewn ffair haf  
Barf a chyrn byrfwch arnaf.<sup>30</sup>

Despite being revered, she was my treasure, the girl does not want to see me any more than if the beard and horns of a he-goat were put on me at a summer fair.

This may be a reference to a typical kind of game or comic ritual at midsummer fairs, involving young men dressing up ‘to act the goat’, since goats were associated with both humour and lechery. The carnival elements of disguise and role reversal seem to be operating here, with the young *uchelwr*, or nobleman, defining his status in opposition to the rustic rituals played out at fairs. Wearing the ‘beard and horns’ of a goat is humiliating not only because of its sexual connotation but also because of its class connotation, reducing the young nobleman to the status of a rustic.<sup>31</sup>

Dressing up in animal horns or skins as an aspect of festival disguisings and fairground games, particularly involving hobby-horses and antlers, is attested in England and Wales from the Middle Ages.<sup>32</sup> There are at least two references in medieval Welsh poetry to *hobi hors*, ‘hobby horse’, clearly a borrowing from the English term, but the Welsh examples actually predate the earliest recorded English form. In a satirical poem addressed to his contemporary, Dafydd ap Gwilym, the fourteenth-century poet Gruffudd Gryg compares Dafydd’s undeserved reputation as a poet to the appearance of the hobby-horse, which looks quite real from a distance but close-to is obviously nothing but wood.<sup>33</sup> Dafydd Llwyd, composing in the fifteenth century, wrote a satirical description of the harpist, Llywelyn ap Gutun, going all round north Wales begging for money to replace his lost horse, and the poet comments that *ni bu . . . hobi-hors un rhaib â hwn*, ‘there was never a hobby-horse as rapacious as he is’.<sup>34</sup> These references to the hobbyhorse in humorous contexts indicate that the Welsh poets tended to associate the culture of the fair with the popular traditions of

the folk, which were in themselves inherently comic.

A distinctly carnivaleque atmosphere is evoked in one of the Dafydd ap Gwilym poems which describes how a girl angrily pours wine over a servant's head, after the poet had sent the servant to solicit her.<sup>35</sup> This event takes place at Rhosyr, the Welsh name for the town of Newborough, on 'Gwyl Bedr', the feast of St Peter, on 29 June, one of the days on which Newborough held a fair. The town is described as crowded with people wearing holiday clothes with money to spend, and the poet also lets us know that this is fair-time:

Gwyl Bedr y bûm yn edrych  
Yn Rhosyr, lle aml gwŷr gwych,  
Ar drwsiad pobl, aur drysor,  
A gallu Môn gerllaw môr.  
Yno'dd oedd, haul Wynedd yw,  
Yn danrhwyg, Enid unrhyw,  
Gwenddyn mynyglgrwn gwynddoeth,  
A gwych oedd a gwiw a choeth,  
Ac unsut, fy nyn geinsyw,  
Yn y ffair â delw Fair fyw,  
A'r byd, am ei gwynbryd gwiw,  
Ar ei hôl, eiry ei heiliw.  
Rhyfedd fu gan y lluoedd,  
Rhodd o nef, y rhyw ddyn oedd.  
Minnau o'm clwyf a'm anhun  
Yn wylo byth yn ôl bun.<sup>36</sup>

On the feast of St Peter I was in Rhosyr, a place full of excellent men, looking at well-dressed people, golden treasure, and at the whole might of Môn [Anglesey] by the sea. There she was, Gwynedd's sunlight, with the force of fire, a kind of Enid, a delicate girl with round neck, fair and modest, and she was excellent and pleasing and refined, and my lovely elegant girl at the fair was like the living image of Mary, while the whole world, because of her fine fair face, followed her, snow is her colouring. It was a marvel to the crowds, a gift from heaven, that there was such a girl. As for me, from my sickness and sleeplessness, I was constantly keeping watch behind the girl.

The poet goes on to describe the excessive drinking which causes him to solicit the girl and then abuse her when she robustly defends herself:

Cael y claerwin o'r dinas  
A'i dywallt yng ngwallt fy ngwas.  
Amarch oedd hynny ymy,  
Amorth Mair i'm hoywgrair hy.

Os o brudd y'm gwarthruddiawdd  
Yngod, cyfadnabod cawdd,  
Asur a chadas gasul,  
Eisiau gwin ar ei min mul!  
Bei gwypwn, gwpl diletpai,  
Madog Hir, fy myd, a'i câi.  
Hwyr y'i gwnâi, hagr westai hy,  
Einion Dot yn un diawty.<sup>37</sup>

She took the bright wine of the city and poured it on my servant's hair. That was an insult to me, Mary's curse on my bold lively treasure. If she disgraced me there on purpose (I know I'm very angry), on his blue and brocade cloak, may her foolish mouth never taste wine! If I had known, Madog Hir could have had her, my darling, in a firm coupling. Einion the Toper would scarcely want to be with her, bold ugly stranger, in the same ale-house.

In this incident, the poet has invoked the main features of carnival, including comic inversion and grotesque realism, to suit the holiday setting. The poem opens with the discourse of courtly love, humorously misapplied to a chance encounter in a tavern during a rowdy feast-day. References to drinking, physical assault and sexual encounters further undermine the courtly imagery, and the town itself, so admired in the opening lines, is revealed not as a location of noble refinement after all, but as the backdrop to some unpleasant sexual politics. The poetic persona, speaking at first in a courtly register, descends speedily to the rhetoric of abuse and misogyny, revealing the shallowness of the courtly manner that he pretends is his own. The poem identifies this false *courtoisie* with the culture of the town, suggesting that urban life is by its very nature non-courtly and degraded. The class satire suggests role inversion – the nobleman who behaves like a burges – but the point of it is to entrench the traditional hierarchy in which the nobility of the *uchelwyr* outranks the commercialism of the bourgeoisie.

### *The politics of the fair*

As well as comic accounts of drunkenness and failed sexual encounters, there are other references in Welsh poetry to fairs and feast-days which avoid the ribald aesthetics of carnival and represent festivals – particularly fairs – as normative aspects of a popular folk culture which is distinct from the courtly culture of the gentry. While recognizing the economic necessity and even advantage of the fairs to local Welsh communities, the poets imply that the commercialism of the fairs belongs to urban culture, and sometimes a specifically English urban culture, rather than forming part of an authentic Welsh way of life. The poets are therefore constructing and celebrating, for their landowning audiences, a concept of Welshness which is grounded in the simple and traditional rituals of the countryside rather than in the commercial

life of the English-dominated towns. This pervasive sense of an authentic 'Welshness' undermined by social and economic changes related to the English incomers precludes the possibility that fairs and feast-days might celebrate and reinforce a social cohesion associated with the towns or their rural hinterlands; rather, the fairs work to draw attention to the exclusion of the Welsh from the urban economy.

One example of the concept of a simple unadorned Welshness is found in a Dafydd ap Gwilym poem in which the poet describes his love for a woman whose beauty needs none of the ornaments worn by the young country girls who dress up for the fair:

Rhai o ferched y gwledydd,  
Se'i gwnân ar ffair, ddinan ddydd,  
Rhoi perls a rhubi purloyw  
Ar eu tâl yn euraid hoyw,  
A gwisgo rhudd, mwyfudd merch,  
A gwyrdd, gwae ni fedd gordderch.  
Ni welir braich, goflfaich gael,  
Na mwnwgl un dyn meinael  
Heb yn ei gylch, taerwylch tes,  
Baderau, bywyd eres.  
Ai rhaid i'r haul, draul dramwy,  
O'r lle mae geisio lliw mwy?  
Nid rheidiach i'm byd rhydeg  
Rhoi rhactal am y tâl teg  
Nac edrych draw'n y gwydryn;  
Da iawn yw gwedd y dyn gwyn.<sup>38</sup>

Some of the girls from the countryside, this is what they do at the fair, delightful day, they put pearls and pure-bright rubies on their foreheads, like a golden glow, and wear red, a great advantage to a girl, and green – woe to anyone who cannot get a lover. Not an arm is seen, fully embraced, nor a neck of a slender-browed girl, without beads, burnished with strong heat, around it, wondrous life. Does the sun, going to and fro from where it is, need to find more colour? It is no more necessary for my beautiful beloved to put a headband around her fair forehead than to glance over into the mirror; the lovely girl's appearance is perfect.

The culture of the fair is evoked to make a particular point about the poet's beloved, who needs no fairground ornaments to enhance her beauty, but the lack of any carnivalesque element links the concept of the fair to the 'official' culture of court poetry. The poet appropriates the world of the fair in order to subject it to a dominant reading which dismisses this world as meretricious

compared to the natural beauty of his beloved who deserves the imagery of courtly love. Because of their Welshness or because of the noble status which the poet claims for them, or both of these things, he and his beloved are positioned as separate from the fair, even though there is much to enjoy there, and the poem implies that the world of the fair fails to be as cohesive as it seems.

A more explicitly political use of festive imagery occurs in a poem by Gruffudd ab Adda (fl.c. 1340–70) addressed to the maypole erected in the market square at Llanidloes. Among fleeting images of the noise and bustle of the typical fair, Gruffudd laments the fate of the noble tree, destined to be on vulgar show in the town:

I borthmonaeth y'th wnaethpwyd,

Mal ar sud maelieres wyd:

Pawb o'r ffair, eurair oroen,

A ddengys â bys dy boen,

I'th unbais lwyd a'th henban,

Ymysg marsiandiaeth mân.<sup>39</sup>

You've been made into a commodity, you're like a kind of pedlar-woman: everyone from the fair, with golden words of excitement, points out your pain with a finger, in your single grey petticoat and your old fur, amongst the little bits of merchandise.

Llanidloes, in the old county of Montgomeryshire (now in Powys), was a planted borough established by Owain de la Pole of Powys, with a mixed population of English and Welsh burgesses.<sup>40</sup> Llanidloes held two fairs each year, and their significance to the economy of the town can be judged by their revenue which, together with the weekly markets, provided most of the lord's income from the town.<sup>41</sup> Gruffudd's poem works on the binary opposition of town and country, which here, as in many of the Welsh court poems, tropes the opposition between English hegemony, located in the towns, and authentic Welsh folk life. The poet deliberately uses the context of the fair to highlight the degradation of the tree, brought down from its natural home in the woodland to the artificial and commercialized surroundings of the town. Despite its inclusion of Welsh burgesses, the town represents, for Gruffudd and his noble audience, the intrusion of an alien way of life into the normative culture of the native Welsh population.

Perhaps the most explicit examples of festival references functioning as political resistance are those found in poems predicting the triumphant return of Welsh rule to Britain. This was a motif which had recurred in Welsh poetry since the Anglo-Saxon period and was revived during the fifteenth century in response to the Wars of the Roses and Welsh hopes of a Welsh king on the English throne.<sup>42</sup> In the prophetic poems, or *cywyddau brud*, of Dafydd Llwyd

(fl.c.1395–1486), ‘Gwŷl Fair’ (probably meaning Lady Day, the feast of the Annunciation on 25 March) is often named as the day of reckoning when the hosts of Owain, the traditional saviour of Wales, will storm into England.<sup>43</sup> 25 March was the official beginning of the new administrative year, and therefore an appropriate date to begin a new regime. In one of Dafydd Llwyd’s prophecies, he has a raven speak of the great slaughter of Englishmen when the Welsh drive them out, and he describes it as a great feast, a *gwylmabsant*:

Gwledd hyd y gogledd o gig,  
Gwledd fawr o Glawdd i Ferwig.  
Pob man fel pe bai mynwent,  
Llawn o gyrff pob llwyn o Gent.  
Ymhob cornel gwaith elawr,  
Ymhob pant gwylmabsant mawr,  
Ymhob cwm, ymhob camawn,  
Ymhob aber larder lawn.<sup>44</sup>

A feast of meat as far as the north, a great feast from Offa’s Dyke to Berwick. Every place like a graveyard, full of the bodies of every grove in Kent. In every corner, the work of the bier, in every valley a great *gwylmabsant*, in every glen, in every combat, in every estuary a full larder.

In this poem the concept of the festival is used as an expression of Welsh unity against English oppression, describing a reversal of the existing power structure in Wales and therefore endowing the festival with an idealized political function. This *gwylmabsant* will be a gruesome carnival indeed, where chaotic violence is harnessed to the political purpose of showing the English once and for all who rules in Britain.

### *The ‘hue and cry’ as carnival*

One tradition which may have functioned to promote a sense of community, in rural villages as well as towns, was the practice of ‘raising hue’, or the ‘hue and cry’ (Lat. *hutesium et clamor*). This social phenomenon occurs as an element of common law in England before the Norman conquest, though the term itself (*huer e cri*) is Anglo-Norman. The Latin term is found in court rolls from the first decade of the thirteenth century, while the earliest record of the Anglo-Norman form occurs in the last decade of that century.<sup>45</sup> In essence, it is a form of community policing, designed to assist local officials, such as a constable or sheriff, in catching criminals during or after a crime.

Some of the descriptions of flight and pursuit which appear as humorous set-pieces in medieval Welsh poetry can be read as deliberate references to the practice of hue and cry, and they function not only to construct a sense of community identity but also to comment indirectly on the imposition of English law on the crown territories of Wales seized after the Edwardian conquest of 1282. In these poetic descriptions of the chaotic pursuit of a supposed felon, the

hue and cry is remediated as a carnival event, one that involves the whole community in a joint enterprise which, like the custom of *charivari* or 'rough music' found on the continent, sanctions a pleasing transgression from social rules while simultaneously managing anti-social behaviour which threatens the stability of the group.

The basic principle of the hue and cry was the pursuit of a fleeing criminal from the scene of the crime, or the raising of the alarm following the discovery of a crime. Anyone who witnessed a crime, or believed a crime had been committed, had to rouse the other villagers by shouting or making a noise and then pursuing or seeking the villain. Technically the duty of the constable, who was responsible for keeping the king's peace, the hue and cry was raised to pursue any criminal or suspicious person and bring them to justice before they escaped to the next parish.<sup>46</sup> W. H. Waters describes the process in late thirteenth-century Wales:

If any trespass against the king's peace were committed, it was the duty of the four nearest townships to pursue the perpetrator until caught, and failure to perform this duty involved them in a heavy amercement.<sup>47</sup>

Once the perpetrator had been caught, they were handed over to the bailiff of the nearest commote and then dispatched to one of the royal prisons in the castle towns.<sup>48</sup>

Raising the hue and cry as a formal legal obligation in Wales was placed on the statute books specifically to deal with the rebellious Welsh in the aftermath of the Edwardian conquest. Following his victory over the Welsh in 1284, Edward I was faced with the problem of establishing law and order in what had become rather anarchic areas of north and west Wales. Before the conquest, there was basically no centralized criminal justice system in Wales: the native princes managed the laws of Wales largely to ensure their own financial interests which were enhanced by compensation payments, while criminal acts were seen as offences against the kindred rather than against the state. It was therefore left up to the kin groups to pay compensation and apply their own sanctions to their kinsfolk.

In the Statute of Wales, published in 1284, Edward set out the legal provisions by which his new Principality, comprising the former independent Welsh regions of north and west Wales, were to be governed.<sup>49</sup> The English system of shires was introduced, each under the jurisdiction of a sheriff. With regard to law and order, the Statute established that criminal law was a matter for the crown and it would be administered under English and not Welsh law. After 1284, Welsh law, preserved in manuscripts from the thirteenth century but codified before the Norman conquest, could be applied only to civil cases such as debt, contracts and sureties.<sup>50</sup>

In particular, Edward wanted to change the emphasis of social control so that it was managed not by the kin-group but by the community as a whole.



One way of doing this was by formalizing the process of hue and cry and making it mandatory by law. Outlining the duties of the sheriff who held courts around his shire, the Statute lists the various criminal activities on which the sheriff ‘shall diligently make Inquiry’, starting with ‘Traitors to our Lord the King’, and including the following:

Of unlawful Yards and Weights and them that sell therewith. Of them that give Lodgings to person unknown for more than two nights. Of blood spilt; of Hue and Cry levied.<sup>51</sup>

Subsequent court rolls refer to the consequences of raising hue, and there are a number of legal cases from the late thirteenth century onwards brought against people who were convicted after a hue and cry, against those who had failed to raise the hue and cry when they should have done so, and against those who raised a false hue and cry.

A year after the Statute of Wales, the Edwardian government issued a further statute, the Statute of Winchester of 1285 (13 Edw. I, Stat. 2, 8 October 1285) which legislated more specifically on the role of the hue and cry in community policing. Each community, at the level of the ‘hundred’ in England, or the ‘commote’ in the principality of Wales, was made responsible for any criminal acts committed in that area, and the men of the hundred could be liable to pay restitution to any victims. It was therefore in their interests to prevent crime where possible and to pursue any suspected criminals with alacrity, including the use of the hue and cry.

The process of the hue and cry, which had no doubt been practised informally for centuries in small communities that had to be more or less self-policing, therefore took on a more significant role after 1284 as part of a general shake-up of law and order issues in Wales which were now to be managed as part of a state system. There is no evidence of any process comparable to the hue and cry in Welsh law, and even if it had been practised informally before 1284, that was the date at which it entered the statute books as a legal requirement in Wales.

Medieval Welsh poetry engages quite explicitly with contemporary legal issues, regularly employing legal terms in literal or metaphorical ways. In the canon of poetry attributed to the fourteenth-century poet Dafydd ap Gwilym we find references, among others, to *arddelw*, ‘claim’, *galanas*, compensation for homicide, *dirwy*, ‘fine’, and *dofraeth*, the right of the lord’s retainers to be billeted with the unfree members of a commote. It is no surprise, then, that the process of hue and cry finds its way into the rich imagery of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century poetry. There is, of course, no medieval Welsh term for ‘hue and cry’, which did not find a Welsh equivalent until the nineteenth century, when the terms *codi’r wlad*, ‘raise the county’, *codi gwaedd ac ymlid*, ‘raise a shout and pursuit’, or *gwaedd wwbw*, ‘a hubbub shout’, are found.<sup>52</sup> However, there are a number of words which represent the sound of a shout, words such

as *hw* or *hwi* (attested from the sixteenth century) which may have been borrowed from the French *hu*. Forms such as *oi*, *hoi* and *hoiau* are found from the thirteenth century and could be related to English forms such as ‘hi’ or ‘hey’. There is also the word *hued* or *huad*, derived from the French *huer*, meaning the huntsman’s shout to his hounds to give chase to the fox or deer, although by the fourteenth century this word had already been transferred to the hound itself.

The absence of any normative term for hue and cry in medieval Welsh is itself significant, in that it suggests an unreadiness to embrace the English system of law that had been imposed after 1284. The legal terms we find in the poetry are all from native Welsh law which had been operating for centuries and which continued to operate after 1284 in all but criminal cases. Insofar as the hue and cry was practised as a legal obligation, it may have been conceptualized by Welsh communities as some other kind of event, such as a fight or a chase or even as a carnivalesque outbreak against the social order. This is certainly how it is represented in Welsh poetry of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

One of the most obvious references in Welsh poetry to the practice of hue and cry is the humorous poem by the fourteenth-century poet, Dafydd ap Gwilym, known in modern editions as ‘Trafferth Mewn Tafarn’, ‘Trouble in a Tavern’. In this poem, the poet attempts a late-night assignation with a barmaid at a tavern but makes so much noise that he wakes everyone up, including three Englishmen sleeping in the tavern who, we can infer, raise the hue and cry:

Dyfod, bu chwedl edifar,  
I fyny, Cymry a’m câr,  
Lle’r oedd garllaw muroedd mawr  
Drisais mewn gwely drewsawr  
Yn trafferth am eu triphac,  
Hicin a Siencin a Siac.  
Syganai’r delff soeg enau,  
Aruthr o ddig, wrth y ddau:  
‘Mae Cymro, taer gyffro twyll,  
Yn rhodio yma’n rhydwyl;  
Lleidr yw ef, os goddefwn,  
’Mogelwch, cedwch rhag hwn.’  
Codi o’r ostler niferoedd  
I gyd, a chwedl dybryd oedd.  
Gygus oeddynt i’m gogylch  
Bob naw i’m ceisio o’m cylch,

A minnau, hagr wyniau hyll,

Yn tewi yn y tywyll.<sup>53</sup>

I got up – Welshmen who love me, it was a tragic tale! – where beside thick walls there were three Englishmen in a stinking bed, worrying about their three packs, Hickin and Jenkin and Jack. The beer-mouthed churl hissed at the other two, extremely angrily, ‘There’s a Welshman, aggressive uprising of deceit, roaming around here feloniously; he’s a thief, if we allow it, take care, keep guard against him.’ The stable-boy roused up the whole household, and it was a dire story. They were glowering on every side of me, all nine looking for me all around me, while I, disfigured by ugly bruises, kept quiet in the darkness.

There is a clear association here between Englishmen and the raising of the hue. The implication is that this is essentially a barbarous English custom imposed on the hapless Welsh to hound them in their own country, and this perhaps explains the delight taken by the Welsh poets in the comic aspect of the hue and cry as a carnivalesque event involving stock characters in farcical chases.

In another account of a hue and cry from the Dafydd ap Gwilym canon, the raiser of the hue is not necessarily English but is of the same type of boorish villain as the three Englishmen in the pub. This is the figure of the jealous husband, always a figure of fun in the Dafydd ap Gwilym canon and invariably represented as non-courtly and therefore ridiculous. In this poem, the poet, seeking an amorous tryst, is chased away by the jealous husband who suspects him of being a thief:

Codi a wnâi’r delff celffaint

O’i wâl ei hun, awel haint,

Llafar ddigwas anrasol,

Llefain o’r milain i’m ôl.

Dug am fy mhen, gwaith enbyd,

Drwy fawr gas y dref i gyd.

Syganai hwn, gwn ganllef,

‘Llyma’i ôl a llym yw ef.’

Rhoi kannwyll Fair ddiweiroed

Yn ael rhych yn ôl fy nhroed.<sup>54</sup>

The withered old blockhead got up from his own bed, with a gust of plague, the roar of an ungodly angry man, the shouting of the villain behind me. He brought down upon my head, a grievous act, the entire town, with great hatred. Then he muttered, and I heard a hundred shouts, ‘Here are his tracks, and he’s a sharp one!’, putting a candle of Mary [i.e. a corpse-candle], pure her life, on the edge of the furrow left by my feet.

The raising of the hue is therefore depicted as the inevitable but not always

justified consequence of shady dealings in the night which may or may not have criminal implications. The point is that the villagers are obliged to raise the hue at the slightest hint of a misdeed, or face prosecution and a fine themselves. The humorous aspect of the chase, with villagers running around with candles looking for footprints, can be read as a disparaging comment on the practice itself as a ludicrous and ineffectual piece of English bureaucracy, but it can also be read from the viewpoint of the *uchelwyr* observing the carnival antics of the lower classes.

The representation of an essentially legal practice as a piece of carnival suggests that such behaviour acted as a guarantee of the cohesiveness of community life while also exercising a certain amount of political criticism, against the state and within a framework of competing class interests, such as those of the *uchelwyr* and the burgesses of the English towns. In legal cases from Wales, it is clear that hue and cry often led to a chaotic ‘free-for-all’ in which injuries sometimes occurred, and the skirmish might well involve Welshmen against English, for example in this case from the piepowder court held at Caernarfon in January 1362:

Mab Tew amerced 2s a jury having found that [MS *compertum est per inquisitionem ex officio captam*] he caused a hue and cry to be raised, to the disturbance of the peace, and so wounded Robert del Cank that blood was shed.<sup>55</sup>

The Welsh poems offer some evidence that the practice of the hue and cry was reinterpreted through the carnival mode of *charivari*, a kind of rough justice administered by the community to its own members who had transgressed in some way, usually in the form of adultery or assault. Again, legal cases tell us that the hue and cry could be used for this purpose, as in this second case from Caernarfon in 1362:

It was found by an inquisition held for the purpose that Gwenllian ferch Ieuan le Couper insulted Gweirful Ddu and assaulted her with bloodshed so that a hue and cry was raised to the disturbance of the peace; therefore she was amerced.<sup>56</sup>

In the absence of a formal culture of carnival in Wales, it is easy to see how the practice of hue and cry might be co-opted as a kind of community ritual, and why poets might represent it humorously as an anarchic and unpredictable expression of village life. In another anonymous poem from the fifteenth century, the poet is interrupted in a tryst by the arrival of the jealous husband and runs away over the fields to hide in a barn until day breaks:

Oni bai fod yr 'hedydd  
Ar gân yn darogan dydd,  
Y'm goddiwesid llid llu  
Ar fy lloches yn llechu.<sup>57</sup>

If it were not for the lark, predicting day in song, the anger of the crowd would have overtaken me, hiding in my refuge.

The reference to 'llid llu', 'the anger of the crowd', implies that the local villagers would have been roused by the jealous husband and set out in hot pursuit of the ill-fated lover, but as long as he stayed out of sight until daylight he could then go on his way lawfully. The reference to taking refuge is a reminder that felons who were being pursued by the hue and cry could and did seek sanctuary in a church, though the poet has to make do with a barn inhabited by a very noisy cockerel.

These poetic depictions of the hue and cry suggest a spontaneity and even anarchy that is more like the 'rough music' of carnival than a formal legal process. These images are, I think, deliberate, in that poets such as Dafydd ap Gwilym and his contemporaries, writing from the viewpoint of the local gentry, the *uchelwyr*, routinely represented village life as humorous, having its own rhythms but sitting outside the norms of courtly behaviour. But the poets are also constructing another kind of subject position, not simply that of the *uchelwyr* but that of the Welsh who found themselves subject to English law after 1282. The reasons for turning the hue and cry into a joke is not just that rustic farmers chasing fugitives across the field are intrinsically funny but that English law is itself something not to be taken seriously.

#### *Carnival as social cohesion*

Given that Welsh towns did hold fairs and celebrate feast-days in ways that involved noisy crowds and plenty of drinking, the question remains as to whether or not the Bakhtinian concept of carnival, as a widespread social ritual, had any validity in medieval Wales. In his study of the *gwylmabsant* or 'parish wake' in early modern Wales, celebrating the feast of the patron saint of a particular parish, Richard Suggett supports a model of social cohesion. He makes a distinction between the post-medieval *gwylmabsant* as a celebration concerned with the differentiation between several community groups in different parishes, and other carnival-type celebrations outside Wales where the main feature of the occasion was to draw attention to the internal social order of a single urban community. Because the *gwylmabsant* did not set out to provoke a direct challenge to this social order, Suggett says that 'the characteristically carnivalesque elements of reversal and disguise which helped dramatize and redefine relationships were conspicuously absent.'<sup>58</sup> In other words, the *gwylmabsant* functioned to unite one specific parish community and express its difference from, and often hostility to, neighbouring urban communities. The carnival element of symbolic inversion was therefore not required.

It is true that there is very little evidence in Wales for traditional carnival features such as Lords of Misrule, masks or pageants, but in the medieval period this is partly attributable to the lack of well-established guild merchants

in Welsh towns who were willing and able to pay for such festivities, as they did in the larger towns of England. The early Welsh laws stipulate that certain officers of the court (that is, of the pre-1282 princes) were entitled to the clothes of their superior on the 'three special feasts', probably Christmas, Easter and Pentecost, and these may be elliptical references to some kind of role reversal at court feasts before 1282. For example, the steward of the court (*distain*) was 'entitled to the clothing of the captain of the household (*penteulu*) at the three special feasts'.<sup>59</sup> Such references could simply mean that each officer received the clothes as part of his remuneration each year, but the possibility of a practice of festive clothesswapping cannot be entirely dismissed.

To the extent that carnival happened at all in England – and Peter Burke argues that it was weaker there than in the Mediterranean countries<sup>60</sup> – in the form of urban ritual and ceremony, it was an expression of the power of the urban elites, represented in the processions and pageants by the guild merchants and religious guilds of the large towns and cities.<sup>61</sup> In the case of English towns, then, the paradigm of urban ceremony as a form of both cohesion and control – both managed by urban authorities – seems to be dominant. Medieval Welsh towns, however, were too small to support such manifestations of civic identity, whether in the form of social cohesion or social control. In his study of primary sources for drama and entertainment in early modern Wales, David Klausner has found a single reference, from 1585, to the role of 'lord of the merry pastimes', for which Richard Price of Beaumaris in Anglesey received remission of his burghage dues of ten shillings.<sup>62</sup> Klausner accepts this as good evidence for a Lord of Misrule in sixteenth-century Wales, and it suggests that the practice of carnivalesque activities familiar elsewhere in Europe was also known in Welsh towns at least by the sixteenth century.

However, there is little evidence from medieval Wales of a traditional carnival culture, mainly because there were few guild merchants in the small towns of Wales who could support the resources required for carnival parades, which in England and the continent involved wagons, costumes, masks and other props. There are a few hints in the poetry that Welsh people had some experience of carnival, mainly in the form of the *gwyilmabsant*, or parish wake, semi-authorized parades held on the feast-day of the parish saint. In an anonymous poem from the fifteenth century, the poet describes the noise of a thunderstorm using carnival imagery:

Clywais fry, ciliais o fraw,

Carliaid utgyrn y curlaw,

Mil fawr yn ymleferydd

O gertweiniau'r sygnau sydd.<sup>63</sup>

I heard above, I fled in terror, the churls with trumpets of the pouring rain, a great thousand of the wagons of the star-signs which are making a din.

Though most towns had a hierarchy of officials, and some had mayors,

according to R. R. Davies 'the towns of Wales were for the most part too small and the range of their activities too limited for a substantial urban elite to emerge in them.'<sup>64</sup> Without such elites, the support of civic ritual was undertaken mainly by the church, which at first endorsed the celebration of the *gwylmabsant* as an appropriate religious festival for the parish. As early as the eleventh century, however, there were episcopal attempts to curtail the excesses of the various feast-days and to confine them to religious observances, attempts which were apparently unsuccessful.<sup>65</sup> Without an urban elite, the burghess hegemony was itself unstable, constantly under challenge from the Welsh gentry and kept in check by the royal or seigneurial officials who managed the towns. Opportunities for exerting social control through ritual were therefore very limited in Welsh towns, but neither was there a cohesive community ready to celebrate its urban identity through feasts and misrule.

### *Conclusion*

Despite the lack of a fully developed carnival tradition in England, and even less of one in Wales, the annual feast-days and their accompanying fairs provided a cycle of urban ritual for the medieval Welsh towns and their rural hinterlands. It is possible to detect elements of carnival at these intersections, even if only at the popular level of carousing and misbehaviour on feast-days, when local gentry strut into town and are made to look foolish. There is an element of role reversal implied in some of the poetic references to feast-day revelries, reversals which, as in carnival proper, draw attention to power imbalances in the social structure.

On the whole, however, the literary references in medieval Welsh poetry relating to urban ritual do not suggest a clear function of either social cohesion, emanating from the people themselves, or social control exercised from above by urban authorities. The reasons are firstly economic, connected with the small size of Welsh towns and their comparative lack of established urban elites and guild merchants; and secondly political, representing the uneven relationships between the towns and the countryside on the one hand, and the English and the Welsh on the other. The first set of reasons helps to explain why medieval Wales failed to develop significant urban rituals until well into the early modern period – there was no merchant oligarchy to support them; and the second locates those rituals that did take place at the intersections of a complex set of social groupings produced by the varied patterns of urban foundation in a militarized and multi-ethnic context.

Because of the particular nature of towns in Wales, which could be predominantly Welsh, predominantly English or could contain a mixture of both, urban communities tended towards fragmentation and hybridity rather than unity. While urban rituals and festivals typically elided boundaries between town and countryside, they could only support a very tenuous kind of social cohesion which was constantly destabilized by the power imbalances



between English and Welsh and their relative trading privileges, and between burgesses and itinerant traders of both nationalities who had to share the commerce of the fairs. Similarly, in the absence of a unified merchant oligarchy, with urban leadership constantly being negotiated among burgesses, the lord of the town, the surrounding Welsh gentry, and sometimes the king as well, there were only limited opportunities for town leaders to use festivals purposefully as a type of 'safety valve'.

The kind of control most evident in the Welsh poems is the cultural control exercised by the dominant Welsh elite, the *uchelwyr*, through their patronage of the court poets and their economic interest in urban communities, either as lords or as agents of the English administration. Gruffudd ab Adda's poem to the maypole gives us a glimpse of popular cohesion in the town on May-day when *pawb*, 'everyone', points a finger at the maypole, but the poet himself, as an agent of *uchelwyr* ideology, stands apart from the spectacle and delivers a dominant reading which deplores the crude commodification of natural beauty.

Poetry is not the same as recorded history, in that literature deliberately creates a mediated version of reality while history attempts to elide such mediation. Evidence for carnival celebration in medieval Welsh poetry should not necessarily be taken literally but as evidence for a particular subjectivity, a way of interpellating listeners as subjects of urban practice. The evidence of the poems indicates that urban celebration in medieval Wales operated largely at the level of the political unconscious, articulating the role of towns as sites of ideological, cultural and economic struggle between Welsh and English, burgesses and gentry, townspeople and the Welsh folk. The poetry represents the 'official' view of 'unofficial' social practice, the expression of folk customs which needed to be managed by the official guardians of Welsh culture, the poets and their patrons. Festive celebration is normalized as part of the (mainly English) urban economy, but the poets suggest that, in the hands of Welsh political leaders, it could also provide a platform for significant social protest. Any evidence for either cohesion or control as the function of urban ritual in medieval Wales is only partial and temporary. It was not until after the Acts of Union in the sixteenth century and the granting of full burghal privileges to all Welshmen that we start to see the emergence of cohesive urban communities in Wales and the full development of rituals such as the *gwylmabsant* to support the power structures within them.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Natalie Zemon Davis, 'The reasons of misrule: youth groups and charivaris in sixteenth-century France', *Past and Present*, 50 (1971), 41–75, on p. 41.

<sup>2</sup>Richard Suggett, 'Festivals and social structure in early modern Wales', *Past and Present*, 152 (1996), 79–112.

<sup>3</sup>Jerry Hunter, 'Cydestunoli ymrysonau'r cywyddwyr: cipolwg ar "yr ysbaddiad barddol"', *Dwned*, 3 (1997), 33–52.

<sup>4</sup>On the relationships between Welsh and English in the medieval period, see R. R. Davies, *Lordship and Society in the March of Wales 1282–1400* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 302–18; R. R. Davies, *Conquest, Co-existence and Change: Wales 1063–1415* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 391–425; R. R. Davies, ‘Race relations in postconquest Wales: confrontation and compromise’, *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1974–75), 32–56; Glyn Roberts, ‘Wales and England: antipathy and sympathy 1282–1485’, *Welsh History Review*, 1, 4 (1963), 375–96.

<sup>5</sup>Charles Phythian-Adams, ‘Ceremony and citizen: the communal year at Coventry’, in Peter Clark and Paul Slack (eds), *Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500–1700* (London, 1972), pp. 57–85; Gervase Rosser, ‘Myth, image and social process in the English medieval town’, *Urban History*, 23, 1 (1996), 5–25; Mervyn James, ‘Ritual, drama and social body in the late medieval English town’, in M. James (ed.), *Society, Politics and Culture: Studies in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 16–47. See also Zemon Davis, ‘The reasons of misrule: youth groups and charivaris in sixteenth-century France’.

<sup>6</sup>Phythian-Adams, ‘Ceremony and citizen’, p. 69.

<sup>7</sup>Rosser, ‘Myth, image and social process’, p. 6.

<sup>8</sup>Michael Bristol, *Carnival and Theater* (London/New York, 1985), p. 52.

<sup>9</sup>Sheila Lindenbaum, ‘Ceremony and oligarchy: the London Midsummer Watch’, in Barbara A. Hanawalt and Kathryn L. Reyerson (eds), *City and Spectacle in Medieval Europe*, (Minneapolis/London, 1994), pp. 171–88, on p. 173.

<sup>10</sup>B. R. McRee, ‘Unity or division? The social meaning of guild ceremony in urban communities’, in Hanawalt and Reyerson (eds), *City and Spectacle in Medieval Europe*, pp. 189–207, especially p. 189.

<sup>11</sup>Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Cambridge, MA, 1968), p. 5.

<sup>12</sup>Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York, 1978), p. 201 and p. 203.

<sup>13</sup>Chris Humphrey, *The Politics of Carnival: Festive Misrule in Medieval England* (Manchester, 2001).

<sup>14</sup>Cited by Humphrey, *Politics of Carnival*, p. 33.

<sup>15</sup>Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca, NY, 1986), pp. 5–6.

<sup>16</sup>Stallybrass and White, *Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, p. 14 and p. 16 (original italics).

<sup>17</sup>This is Stuart Hall’s phrase. See his comments on Stallybrass and White’s book in his article, ‘For Allon White: metaphors of transformation’, in Allon White, *Carnival, Hysteria, and Writing: Collected Essays and Autobiography* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 1–25, on p. 24.

<sup>18</sup>Jody L. H. McQuillan, 'Dangerous dialogues: the *sottie* as a threat to authority', in Thomas J. Farrell (ed.), *Bakhtin and Medieval Voices* (Gainesville, FL, 1996), pp. 61–77.

<sup>19</sup>In his discussion of Ideological State Apparatuses, Althusser says they are 'not only the *stake*, but also the *site* of class struggle'. See 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (notes towards an investigation)', in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York, 1971), pp. 127–86, on p. 147. For Hall's comment, see Stuart Hall, 'The whites of their eyes: racist ideologies and the media', in George Bridges and Rosalind Brunt (eds), *Silver Linings* (London, 1981), pp. 28–52, on p. 30.

<sup>20</sup>To quote Hall, 'High and low may not have the canonical status claimed for them; but they remain fundamental to the way cultural practices are organized and regulated' – in other words, these cultural hierarchies, however arbitrary, are necessary 'to fix, stabilize, and regulate a "culture" in hierarchical ascending order, using all the metaphorical force of the "above" and the "below"' ('Metaphors of transformation', p. 23).

<sup>21</sup>For example, the poems by Guto'r Glyn, Tudur Aled and Lewis Glyn Cothi, cited by Llinos B. Smith, 'Oswestry', in R. A. Griffiths (ed.), *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales* (Cardiff, 1978), pp. 219–42. See also Dafydd Johnston's chapter in this book (Chapter 4).

<sup>22</sup>E. A. Lewis, *The Mediaeval Boroughs of Snowdonia* (London, 1912), p. 176.

<sup>23</sup>On the continuation of trade *in patria*, see Lewis, *The Mediaeval Boroughs of Snowdonia*, p. 175. He also refers to the Welsh preference for Newborough, p. 176. See also A. D. Carr, *Medieval Anglesey* (Llangefni, 1982), pp. 240–1.

<sup>24</sup>Dafydd Johnston et al. (eds), *Cerddi Dafydd ap Gwilym* (Cardiff, 2010), no. 88, l. 40. All subsequent references to the Dafydd ap Gwilym canon are taken from this edition. All translations of Welsh poetry are mine.

<sup>25</sup>Huw Meirion Edwards (ed.), *Gwaith Madog Dwygraig* (Aberystwyth, 2006), no. 15, l. 22. On the role of itinerant traders in the medieval market economy, see Edward Miller and John Hatcher, *Medieval England: Towns, Commerce and Crafts 1086–1348* (London, 1995), p. 157. For a useful survey of women's working conditions in the Middle Ages, see Judith M. Bennett, 'Medieval women, modern women: across the great divide', in David Aers (ed.), *Culture and History 1350–1600* (New York/London, 1992), pp. 147–75.

<sup>26</sup>The Welsh dictionary, *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru* (Cardiff, 1950–2002), gives 'commotion, bustle, struggle, fight' as alternative meanings for *ffair*, indicating the frequency with which fairs and fights were associated. The *Middle English Dictionary* and the *Oxford English Dictionary* do not offer similar collocations.

<sup>27</sup>Barry J. Lewis (ed.), *Gwaith Madog Benfras ac Eraill o Feirdd y Bedwaredd Ganrif ar Ddeg* (Aberystwyth, 2007), no. 9, ll. 11–12.

<sup>28</sup>For some examples, see John Fisher, 'The Welsh calendar', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1894–5), 137–8.

<sup>29</sup>The first line of the poem is 'Mi a wnaif ac a wnaif', and it survives only in late manuscripts (seventeenth century). See, for example, Oxford, Bodley e 1, f. 88b. On the festivals of John the Baptist and John the Evangelist, see Fisher, 'The Welsh calendar', pp. 125–7.

<sup>30</sup>*Cerddi Dafydd ap Gwilym*, no. 145, ll. 19–22.

<sup>31</sup>In medieval bestiaries, the he-goat was described as 'a stubborn, lascivious animal' which is also associated with sin. See Richard Barber (trans.), *Bestiary: Being an English Version of the Bodleian Library, Oxford MS Bodley 764* (London, 1992), p. 83. The editors of *Cerddi Dafydd ap Gwilym* note that cuckolds were made to wear horns on their head, and that horns were also typically used in medieval images of peasants. See *Cerddi Dafydd ap Gwilym*, pp. 741–2.

<sup>32</sup>Ronald Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun: A History of the Ritual Year in Britain* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 81–94.

<sup>33</sup>See *Cerddi Dafydd ap Gwilym*, no. 25 and note to l. 29.

<sup>34</sup>W. Leslie Richards (ed.), *Gwaith Dafydd Llwyd o Fathafarn* (Cardiff, 1964), no. 69, ll. 43–4.

<sup>35</sup>*Cerddi Dafydd ap Gwilym*, no. 74.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, no. 74, ll. 1–16.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, no. 74, ll. 49–60. See also Dafydd Johnston's discussion of this poem in Chapter 4.

<sup>38</sup>*Cerddi Dafydd ap Gwilym*, no. 138, ll. 1–16.

<sup>39</sup>Thomas Parry (ed.), *The Oxford Book of Welsh Verse* (Oxford, 1962), p. 91.

<sup>40</sup>For the history of Llanidloes, see Ian Soulsby, *The Towns of Medieval Wales* (Chichester, 1983), pp. 170–2. See also Davies, *Conquest, Co-existence and Change*, pp. 258–9.

<sup>41</sup>In 1293, the revenue from the fairs and markets was nearly five times as much as the income from burgage rents. See M. Beresford, *New Towns of the Middle Ages* (London, 1967), pp. 65–8.

<sup>42</sup>For further discussion of this theme, see H. Fulton, *Welsh Prophecy and English Politics in the Late Middle Ages* (Aberystwyth, 2008).

<sup>43</sup>*Gwaith Dafydd Llwyd o Fathafarn*. See, for example, poems 4.67, 15.28, 18.23, 24.29. See also no. 21, l. 25, for a reference to Gwŷr Ieuan Efengyl (24 June) as the day of battle against the English. On the significance of 25 March as the official beginning of the year, see Fisher, 'The Welsh calendar', p. 105; Hutton, *Stations of the Sun*, p. 8.

<sup>44</sup>*Gwaith Dafydd Llwyd o Fathafarn*, no. 36, ll. 41–8.

<sup>45</sup>A reference to pursuing felons *cum clamore et cornu*, 'with shouts and horns', appears in the treaty made between King John and the north Welsh

ruler Llywelyn ap Iorwerth in July 1201, and this seems to be the earliest reference to a practice of hue and cry in Wales (*Rotuli Patentium in turri Londinensi asservati*, ed. T. D. Hardy [London, Record Commission, 1883], pp. 8–9). I am grateful to Professor Daniel Power of Swansea University for providing this reference.

<sup>46</sup>See A. L. Brown, *The Governance of Late Medieval England 1272–1461* (London, 1989), p. 110; Helen M. Jewell, *English Local Administration in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1972), pp. 165–6; H. R. T. Summerson, ‘The structure of law enforcement in the thirteenth century’, *American Journal of Legal History*, 23 (1979), 313–27; N. J. G. Pounds, *A History of the English Parish* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 193–4.

<sup>47</sup>W. H. Waters, *The Edwardian Settlement of North Wales* (Cardiff, 1935), p. 136.

<sup>48</sup>Davies, *Conquest, Co-existence and Change*, p. 173.

<sup>49</sup>J. C. Davies, ‘Felony in Edwardian Wales’, *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1916–17), 145–96.

<sup>50</sup>Waters, *Edwardian Settlement*, p. 135.

<sup>51</sup>*Statutes of Wales*, ed. Ivor Bowen (London, 1908), p. 6.

<sup>52</sup>Dr Deborah Youngs, Swansea University, has drawn my attention to a Star Chamber court case of the early sixteenth century where it is recorded that a local community in Llanwern, on the Marches of Wales, ‘cried by the weye Oob oobe which [is] the outcrie used in that contreye’ (TNA STAC 2/20/223). This would appear to represent the Welsh *wbwb* which is otherwise attested only from the nineteenth century (see *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru*, p. 1548).

<sup>53</sup>*Cerddi Dafydd ap Gwilym*, no. 73, ll. 49–66.

<sup>54</sup>*Cerddi Dafydd ap Gwilym*, no. 55, ll. 35–58.

<sup>55</sup>*Caernarvon Court Rolls, 1361–1402*, ed. G. P. Jones and Hugh Owen (Caernarfon, 1951), p. 18.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>57</sup>*Dafydd ap Gwilym: Apocrypha*, ed. H. Fulton (Llandysul, 1996), no. 6, lines 75–8.

<sup>58</sup>Suggett, ‘Festivals and social structure in early modern Wales’, p. 109.

<sup>59</sup>Dafydd Jenkins (ed. and trans.), *The Law of Hywel Dda* (Llandysul, 1986), p. 12.

<sup>60</sup>Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, p. 191.

<sup>61</sup>This is the argument of McRee in ‘Unity or division? The social meaning of guild ceremony in urban communities’ (see note 10 above).

<sup>62</sup>David Klausner, *Records of Early Drama: Wales* (London/Toronto, 2005), p. 42.

<sup>63</sup>*Dafydd ap Gwilym: Apocrypha*, ed. H. Fulton (Llandysul: Gwasg Gomer,

1996), no. 44, lines 29–32.

<sup>64</sup>R. R. Davies, *The Revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr* (Oxford, 1995), p. 26 and p. 48. E. A. Lewis says that it was only in the towns of Conwy, Caernarvon and Beaumaris that a merchant class flourished to any extent in north Wales (*Mediaeval Boroughs of Snowdonia*, p. 210).

<sup>65</sup>Fisher, ‘The Welsh calendar’, p. 131.

## Entertainment and Recreation in the Towns of Early Wales

**David Klausner**

In his 1603 *Description of Penbrokeshire*, the antiquary George Owen noted that, for the most part, Welsh towns were ‘indifferent for intertainment’.<sup>1</sup> While it is unlikely that Owen meant the word in the same sense that we would normally understand it, his comment may well remain valid for the modes of ‘entertainment’ with which I am concerned. This chapter, then, will survey the various modes of entertainment (in the modern sense) available to the urban Welsh from the later Middle Ages through to the middle of the seventeenth century. The bulk of the evidence for this survey will be drawn from my volume, *Records of Early Drama: Wales*. The entertainment available to the citizenry of English boroughs will be a frequent comparator, not least in that the surviving materials are so much more extensive east of Offa’s Dyke.

### *Sources*

For a very substantial number of English boroughs, a primary source for the details of formal civic entertainment lies in the borough’s own administrative records, whether corporation minute books or formal accounts kept by a civic official. Such records survive only very sporadically for Welsh boroughs, and even then only for relatively brief stretches of time. The civic accounts of Haverfordwest are well known, having been published in the Board of Celtic Studies’ History and Law Series, but more limited records also survive from Swansea, Denbigh and Beaumaris.<sup>2</sup> The churchwardens’ accounts of English urban parishes frequently provide information on church-related entertainments, such as church ales and religious plays, but such accounts are extremely rare in Wales. Private documents (household accounts, memorandum books, journals) often record occasions of entertainment, but their survival is very haphazard. One of the most useful sources for documenting the history of civic entertainment in Wales is the records of the Court of Great Sessions (from 1541 onwards), not because those involved in entertainment are necessarily more likely to be brought before the court, but because the survival of these records is so much more extensive, although far from complete.<sup>3</sup> If this brief outline of source materials seems uncomfortably thin, it should lead to the further conclusion that our overview of civic entertainment in early Wales will of necessity be limited and skewed by the nature of these sources. The gaps in the surviving documentation must always be kept firmly in mind.

### *Drama*



Civic and parish drama were common forms of celebratory recreation in English boroughs. Although the great biblical plays of York, Chester, and Coventry have traditionally held pride of place in the study of civic drama, the materials now appearing through the Records of Early English Drama project show that for many towns, parish drama – rarely biblical and often secular in nature – was more common than guild-sponsored biblical drama.<sup>4</sup> There is no evidence of either civic biblical drama or of parish drama in early Wales; where these occur in England, they often do so on a regular calendar – for biblical drama, at Whitsun or Corpus Christi, for parish plays, on a patronal festival or other annual celebration. This regularity suggests that it is more likely that the complete absence of such events in the Welsh records is a function, not of the loss of records, but of the absence of such events from the calendar. This does not mean that dramatic performance was unknown in early Wales. Swansea's Common Attorneys' accounts (1617–1635) preserve regular payments to glaziers for repair to the windows of the Town Hall, usually accompanied by receipts from 'stadg players' to cover the cost of such repairs.<sup>5</sup> Leaving aside a myriad unanswered (and unanswerable) questions, one thing is clear: Swansea saw a regular, perhaps annual, performance by a group of players. We know nothing of the content of their performance, nor of the language in which it was delivered, nor why it would so consistently break the Town Hall's windows. But there was a play.

If the use of Swansea's Town Hall suggests official civic involvement, parish involvement is suggested in the report of a play performed just down the road from Swansea in Llanelli, in the parish church of St Elli in May of 1604. The event was far from a straightforward parish play, however. Its description is found in a Star Chamber bill of indictment directed at a group of ruffians led by one David Phillip Bowen who had previously terrorized English residents of the area and planned the murder of a customs official. In the final accusation of the bill, Bowen,

making noe Conscience to prophane and abuse the said Temple of god & howse of prayer He the said Phillippe Bowen being Cheiftaine and Ringleader vnto all the reste coulde not be satisfied onelye with Causinge a moste profaine and scurrulous stage playe to be acted and played vpon or aboute the twentieth daye of Maye laste within the perishe Church of Llanelly aforesaid to the great dishonor of god the prophayninge of his Temple the breache of your Maiesties lawes and the greevous offence of manye trewe Christian protestantes and loyal Subiectes vnto Your Maiestie . . .<sup>6</sup>

The sectarian reference here suggests that the performance might have been a recusant play, although the question of why it would take place in the parish church remains unanswered.<sup>7</sup> The recently discovered letter book of the Protestant divine Christopher Goodman, in which he catalogues the 'abuses' he finds in the 1572 performance of the Chester plays, gives a good idea of what Llanelli's 'trewe Christian protestantes' might have found offensive, but on the

basis of the information given in the bill of indictment we can no more than speculate on the Llanelli play's content.<sup>8</sup>

Although we have no civic records of biblical plays in Wales, we do have two surviving plays – a Nativity Play and a Passion Play. These appear to have achieved some widespread popularity, since each survives in whole or in part in twelve manuscripts, several of which contain both plays. None of the manuscripts contains any hint of a specific performance, nor can the manuscripts all be localized to the same area. While most of them appear to derive from the north-east, the dialect of several of the manuscripts would suggest a southern Welsh provenance.<sup>9</sup> Although the two plays may well have been intended for public performance, this cannot be established with certainty. While frequent direct address would suggest the presence of an audience, there is a complete absence of stage directions, and the text of the plays consistently ignores the requirements of staging. For example, in the Crucifixion scene, the action moves instantaneously from the First Knight's direction to raise up Christ's cross to the crucifixion of the two thieves, followed immediately by the soldiers' gaming for Christ's cloak:

Y Marchoc Kynta:

Trewch vyneidie yr hoelon yni traed ai  
ddwylo ddigon kodwch yn ychel efo mal i  
gwelo yr iddewon

Yr Ail Marchoc:

Moysswch grogi oi ddevtv y ddav leidy  
wedi barnv nyni dynwn gytysav am i  
pyrssav yforv

Y Trydydd Marchoc:

Beth a wnawn yw bais yntav jessu o  
nassreth vyneidiav ai thori yn bedair darn  
ai Roi ar varn kwtysav<sup>10</sup>

First Knight:

Pound the nails, my lads, firmly into his  
feet and hands; lift him up so that the  
Jews may see.

Second Knight:

Let there be crucified on each side of him  
the two thieves who have been  
condemned. We'll draw lots for the purses  
tomorrow.

Third Knight:

What shall we do with his cloak, Jesus of  
Nazareth, my lads? Shall we cut it into  
four parts or make the decision by  
drawing lots?

There is no sense that time has been allowed for stage action; that is, for the raising of the Cross – an action which in the Passion Play from the York Cycle (for example) takes almost 100 lines. This lack of concern for the staging of the Welsh plays might suggest a mode of performance other than full staging – a reading performance, perhaps. Even with a reading performance, the forces required are substantial. The Nativity Play has at least twelve speaking parts and the Passion Play at least thirty, with some speech-headings unclear as to

the number of persons involved ('Yr Ysgolheigion' [The Scholars], 'Yr Iddewon' [The Jews]). Given their substantial manuscript survival and the use of direct address to a putative audience, I am inclined to think the plays were performed, though whether fully staged or not is an open question. In whatever manner the plays were performed, however, there is little question that it must have been in an urban context given the resources needed.<sup>11</sup>

The language of the two biblical plays implies a Welsh-speaking audience. Our sole surviving evidence for school plays implies not only an anglophone audience, but some acquaintance with the London theatre world, though perhaps only through printed editions. The Rev. William Williams, head-master of the Free School in the highly anglicized borough of Beaumaris, wrote performing prefaces for two plays performed at the school in 1652 and 1655. The first of these was *The Rebellion of Naples, or The Tragedy of Massenello*, printed in 1649 and attributed by Williams to Thomas Bayly, son of Lewis Bayly, bishop of Bangor. The play would certainly have been an odd choice for schoolboys. It tells the story of the fisherman Massenello who leads the Neapolitan revolt against the Spanish in 1647, but who is driven mad by the acquisition of power. The play includes two onstage beheadings, and the printed playtext includes a stage direction for Massenello's death: 'He thrusts out his head, and they cut off a false head made of a bladder fill'd with blood. Exeunt with his body.'<sup>12</sup> The second play for which Williams provided a prologue was Thomas Randolph's *The Muses' Looking Glass* (printed in 1638), a pastoral comedy which would seem to fit rather better with the school venue. Randolph's play had been licensed for the king's revels in 1630, but there is no evidence that (other than the Beaumaris performance) *Massenello* was ever performed.<sup>13</sup> The fact that these were both relatively recent plays (one of them very recent) would suggest that Williams was aware of the wider theatrical world. If Williams' identification of the printed text's author 'T.B.' as Thomas Bayly is correct, the play may have reached Beaumaris through Thomas' father, the bishop of Bangor.

There is no evidence in the larger boroughs of Wales for dedicated performance spaces like 'The Quarry' at Shrewsbury, though it is clear from the Swansea records that a town hall or guild hall might be used for such purposes.<sup>14</sup> Some smaller towns did have outdoor 'playing places', although it is not always clear whether these were intended for dramatic performance or for games like football. References to such spaces can be found in court records for Penley and Tallarn Green, both in Flintshire, and both very close to the English border.<sup>15</sup>

### Music

Evidence for music in urban Wales is more extensive than that for drama, and may be divided into the formal and the informal. Formal music in some Welsh boroughs was dominated by city waits, musicians in the direct employ of the

borough. The civic accounts of Haverfordwest, for example, record frequent payments between 1582 and 1596 for cloth and tailoring for the making of livery coats for the city's waits. It is useful that a coat was made for the beadle at the same time, but separated in the accounts, so by comparing the expenses for the beadle's livery and that of the waits it is clear that there were two of them. The accounts give no information on their instrumentation, repertoire or duties.

Ruthin, too, had civic musicians, and we should not know of their existence had not James Whitelocke, chief justice of the Chester circuit, recorded their (private) performance at the Ruthin assizes in 1621: 'We were enterteyned at Denbighe withe a latin oration in the market place & a refreshing of wyne & Cakes when we went from Denbighe toward the Pole we wear enterteyned at Ruthin withe the waites of the towne & a banquet a latin oration & an enterlude . . .'<sup>16</sup> The lack of musical entertainment in Denbigh may indicate that the borough did not employ musicians, but the very limited survival of Denbigh civic records does not allow certainty.

Less formal music than the waits is often visible in the presence of musicians. One Richard Williams of Ruthin, musician, appeared before Great Sessions on 3 February 1598/9 to give evidence concerning the cutting of his wife's purse.<sup>17</sup> Since his employment is not relevant to the case, no further information is given; it is possible that he might have been one of the town's waits, if they were in existence at that time. More extensive information on itinerant musicians appears in the Great Sessions material in the records of cases when performers were brought before the court for plying their trade. In most cases, presentment is made to the court of a number of persons detained under the Elizabethan statute on Rogues, Vagabonds, and Sturdy Beggars, first promulgated in 1572.<sup>18</sup> Under the statute, itinerant musicians were classified as 'masterless men' and could be brought before the court and imprisoned. The Great Sessions records are full of such presentments, generally for players of instruments for dancing, especially fiddle, or pipe and tabor, but also including performers on the native Welsh instruments *crwth* and harp, as well as poets. Their performances, often tavern-based, were hardly limited to an urban environment, but the range of Great Sessions references indicate that they did not avoid the larger boroughs and towns. As an example, a 1553 list of 'vakabondes cawlllyng them selyffes mystrelles' was presented to the Denbighshire Great Sessions, including three fiddlers, three harp players, two *crwth* players, one dancer, and at least five poets.<sup>19</sup>

Evidence for private music can be found both in household accounts, in which payments to musicians are often recorded, and documents such as wills and probate inventories which reflect ownership of instruments. In addition, private letters occasionally refer to the hiring of a music tutor or the purchase of an instrument for family use. Household accounts do not survive in abundance, but those we do have reveal a lively interest in private performance

by professional musicians, though many of these performances took place in private homes at some distance from an urban environment. Some records indicate a serious interest in both native Welsh music and English music: the household books of Sir John Salusbury's manor of Llewenni not only record payments to players of the native instruments of harp and *crwth*, but also include a lengthy list of popular English ballad tunes copied, on the evidence of its spelling, by a Welsh-speaker.<sup>20</sup> A similar list appears in the commonplace book of Philip Powell of Brecon; the English nature of his list is reinforced by its title, 'Lute Leasons'.<sup>21</sup> Witnesses' depositions in an assault case in Newtown in 1640 provide the peripheral information that the affray began from an argument in the house of Edward Tue, 'there beinge diuerse persons heareinge of one playenge vppon the harpe'.<sup>22</sup> Although the depositions are not entirely clear on this point, it seems likely that Tue's house was a private home, and not a public house or tavern.

The instruments most commonly found in private hands are harps and, from the early seventeenth century onwards, virginals. Harps appear in the inventories of the Holland family of Kinmel Park, the Salusbury family of Bachymbyd, the Herbert family of Cogan Pill, and two Cardiff residents, Edward Collins and William Gamage.<sup>23</sup> Virginals, reflecting a move away from traditional Welsh music, can be found in inventories from Llwyn Knottia (Denbighshire), Trewythan (Montgomeryshire), Presteigne (Radnorshire), and that of Thomas Banks, Dean of St Asaph.<sup>24</sup> According to the depositions when her will was contested in 1625, Lady Anne Morgan of Pen-coed, Monmouthshire, owned both a harp and a pair of virginals.<sup>25</sup>

A particularly interesting case of instrument ownership is provided by the various inventories of the estate of Sir John Perrot and his son Sir Thomas. John Perrot, a favourite of Elizabeth I, was sent to the Tower in 1592 on a false charge of communicating with the king of Spain, and died that same year before the charges could be refuted. A thorough inventory of his estate was produced as a part of the attainder process. Elizabeth seems to have understood the falsity of the charges against Perrot, for she very quickly granted his estates to his son, Thomas. Thomas died in 1594, and his probate inventory shows that the fine collection of instruments assembled by his father was still intact at the time of his death. This collection at Carew Castle included (at the time of Sir John's attainder) 'one payre of virginholles' as well as 'certaine other Instrumentes viz. ij shackbutes in ij cases v Cornettes in one Case a vjt parte violen, viij hoboyes, a flute & ij Recorders' and various books of music. Two years later, the list included 'ij rebickes & ij treble vyolls' and a bandora.<sup>26</sup> I think it very likely that the eight 'hoboyes' represent a full consort of shawms and curtals (from which the oboe would develop about a century later). If so, this was a collection on a grand scale, one which would have been the envy of the great professional civic bands of cities like York and Norwich.<sup>27</sup>

Finally, a number of private documents exhibit a concern with both the

availability and quality of instruction in music for young people. Thus the will of Robert Wynn of Conwy (the builder of the fine townhouse of Plas Mawr, now superbly reconstructed by Cadw<sup>28</sup>) makes provision for the establishment of a Free School in the borough of Conwy. Although Wynn's plans for the school never materialized, he states explicitly in his will that his executors should place in charge of it a man expert in 'grammar and musicke'.<sup>29</sup> In 1606/7, Edward Price wrote to Sir William Maurice of Clenennau, Caernarfonshire, for a recommendation of a music teacher, understanding that one of Maurice's daughters 'dyd learn to playe on the Lute & virginalles'. The extensive collection of letters surviving from the family of Sir John Wynn of Gwydir, Caernarfonshire, show frequent concern for finding appropriate schools for his children where they may 'be taught to singe and to play vpon instruments . . .'. Fifteen years later, the concern remained, as Wynn's friend Humphry Jones, keeper of the records at Caernarfon, wrote to him that he had found 'a very good musition vpon the base viall and Virginalls [who] Can teach younge gentlewomen to play not onely vpon either of those instrumentes but can trayne them vp in their pricksonges by the booke, whereby they may inn a short tyme be the more apt to lerne vpon ther instrumentes . . .'.<sup>30</sup> This interest in music pedagogy among the gentry, whether town-based or resident in a rural manor, as well as the private ownership of instruments like harp or virginals which can be played by a single person and used for accompaniment, strongly suggests that there was no expectation that musical entertainment should be left to professional performers.

### *Bards and poets*

Entertainment by bards and poets, however, was almost entirely left to the professionals. The provisions for bardic education outlined in the Statute of Gruffudd ap Cynan (1523) describe a multi-year process of slow advancement leading to a life-long career.<sup>31</sup> A major element in the entertainment which a poet could offer his patron was his *cwrs clera*, a defined circuit of patrons whom he would visit on a regular schedule for the performance of poetry in their honour. The Statute gives clear instructions on how frequently such a circuit might be undertaken, the charges a poet might ask for a poem (with a significant difference between the performance of an existing poem and the composition of a new one), and restrictions on whom the poet might include on his circuit, based on their income. A unique list of a poet's *cwrs clera* was kept by Rhys Cain around the end of the sixteenth century, and includes visits identified by names of his patrons, but also a number identified only by the town name.<sup>32</sup> It is not clear whether these entries indicate a more public performance than the private household performances implied by the rest of the list, but this does seem a possibility.

Household accounts include payments to poets, often at important feasts. So between Christmas and New Year in 1594/5, William Lewis of Prysaeaddedf, Anglesey, was entertained by five poets, one *datgeiniad* (who recites poems

composed by others), ten harp players and two *crwth* players.<sup>33</sup> A well-known list of performers who attended the Christmas feast at Lleweni, Denbighshire, in 1595 included four harpers, two *crwth* players, and seven poets.<sup>34</sup> Poets were frequently a major part of the entertainment for a wedding feast and, unusually, a set of satirical poems survives from a 1555 wedding in the family of Llwyd of Rhiwedog, Merioneth. These poems represent one of the very few surviving examples of a *cyff clêr* (butt of bards) in which a senior poet is ‘roasted’ by his students and other younger poets. In this case, the senior bard was Gruffudd Hiraethog (d.1564), and it is likely his standing as a poet which ensured the survival of the wedding poems, in spite of their somewhat scurrilous nature.<sup>35</sup> A feast was not a requirement for a bardic visit; Sir Thomas Myddelton of Chirk Castle, Denbighshire, gave a very generous ten shillings each to two poets who presented him with their panegyrics in 1654.<sup>36</sup>

### *‘Ludi inhonesti’*

As in England, the urban Welsh population devised a wide range of participatory entertainments and recreations for themselves. Fortunately for us, many of these were frowned upon by the authorities, civil or ecclesiastical, and thus references to them appear very frequently in the records of the courts. Collectively, these recreations were styled by the courts ‘ludi inhonesti’ or ‘unlawful games’. When, rarely, they are itemized, they generally include all games of chance, especially playing at cards, but including dicing and games like mumchance.<sup>37</sup> Football and other ball games are frequently mentioned, and after 1617 the list expands to include those sports which were prohibited by James I’s *Declaration of Sports*.

The principal target of such prosecutions was any recreation which involved gambling, and inn and tavern keepers who permitted games of chance on their premises were a particular focus of the courts. Legal action against persons playing ‘unlawful games’ and against inn keepers permitting such conduct was common, though the constant repetition of these statutes and ordinances suggests that their effectiveness was limited. Court records provide frequent examples. Denbighshire’s Court of Great Sessions defined unlawful games in 1553 as ‘bowllyng, dyssing, kardyng, and tenys’, and a Carmarthenshire alehouse-keeper was prosecuted in 1591 for ‘*permittendo illegales & prohibitos lusus*’.<sup>38</sup> A similar document from the Merioneth quarter sessions, dated 29 May 1601, gives evidence of continuing concern about such pastimes, especially in their relation to the licensing of alehouses,<sup>39</sup> and this is echoed in Cowbridge’s municipal ordinances of 1610: ‘. . . ytt is Ordeyned, That noe person shall play at Dice, cardes, bowles, nor other vnlawful games, within the said Towne, nor the frannchise of the same, vppon payne of amercement of xijd vppon him that oweth the howse that suche play is kepte in.’ The fines for playing tennis are particularly steep: ‘. . . that there be noe tenyse playinge within the highe streate vppon payne of iij s iij d to be levied vppon every of them that playethe’.<sup>40</sup>



One recreation which was permitted by the ‘Book of Sports’, as it came to be called, was ‘dauncing, either men or women . . . May-Games, Whitson Ales, and Morris-dances; and the setting vp of May-poles and other sports therewith vsed . . .’.<sup>41</sup> Morris dancing seems not to have been popular in Wales; the only evidence for it I have found is in two Great Sessions cases involving dancers. In the first, at Bwlchycibau, Montgomeryshire, an affray broke out at a morris dance and several people were injured; in the second, at Caersŵs, also in Montgomeryshire, an alehouse keeper is prosecuted for hosting a morris dance. Both these events took place on Midsummer’s Day 1653, and it is tempting to speculate that the dancers were the same in each case. However, the distance from Bwlchycibau to Caersŵs is about twenty-four miles, so it is unlikely that the same dancers appeared in both towns on the same day. Given the paucity of Welsh references to morris dancing, it is also tempting to speculate that the dancers had come over from Herefordshire, where morris dancing was extremely popular, and both Caersŵs and Bwlchycibau are not far from the border.<sup>42</sup> The Caersŵs case gives no names except that of the alehouse keeper, but in the Bwlchycibau case it seems much more likely that the participants are local: the pipe and tabor player was from Llandrinio, Montgomeryshire, and the dancers are named – John Tomkins, Griffith Pugh, Evan Pugh, John Davies, John Tomley and one unidentified young man. Given the preponderance of Welsh names, they were most likely a local group, though they may well have learned their dances from Herefordshire sources. A dance at Hawarden, Flintshire, in 1607 which also led to an affray and the death of one participant may well have been a morris dance, but the court documents do not specifically note it as such.

A sword dance given as part of the Wrexham entertainment for a neighbourhood ‘bidding spinning’ in 1639, held presumably to honour a newly betrothed or newly-wed couple, turned to tragedy when Anne Wadsworth, 14, got in the way of the sword and was killed. The dancer, William Parry, had come ‘apparrelled in a womans apparrell’ to deliver a posy to ‘some of the younge weomen there . . .’.<sup>43</sup> As noted above, dancers occasionally appear in presentments to the Court of Great Sessions in lists of ‘rogues, vagabonds, and sturdy beggars’, along with fiddlers, harp players, pipe and tabor players, and generalized ‘minstrels’, suggesting that for some it represented a livelihood. The appearance before the Flintshire Court of Great Sessions in 1547 of two men named ‘Downseor/Dawnnseir’ (that is, Welsh *dawnsiwr*, ‘dancer’) would also suggest a profession.

One form of participatory recreation encouraged by the ‘Book of Sports’ was dancing around a maypole, and there is considerable evidence that such pastimes were popular in urban Wales. Gruffudd ab Adda ap Dafydd’s wellknown poem to a birch tree, cut down to make a maypole for Llanidloes, Montgomeryshire, implies that maypoles were a familiar sight as early as 1365.

A maypole figures prominently in a case brought before the Court of Star Chamber in 1597. The exact nature of the case is a bit unclear, since the bill of indictment, which would have explained the charges in detail, is missing, and the case must be reconstructed from the depositions of the defendants and the answers of one defendant and the plaintiff to the Court's interrogatories. Two of the many elements of the charges clearly involve dancing. First, the defendant, along with several others, is said to have gone about the lordship of Bromfield in the night time with a minstrel dancing, and to have danced with a minstrel at Llwyn-on green 'during the tyme of dyvine service in the after noone . . .'. Second, it is charged that the same group of people did 'some tyme the last sommer in the night tyme beare and bringe a long pole to the towne of Wrexham and sett yt vp neare the high crosse there termynge yt A maye pole . . .'. The defendant's answer to both these charges was that he understood that both events had taken place, but that he had been present at neither of them.<sup>44</sup> The examination of one William David before the Denbighshire Court of Great Sessions in 1622/3 on a charge of theft notes that the alehouse in Rhosllannerchrugog (in the parish of Ruabon) was situated 'nere the Maypoule'. The maypole is entirely incidental to the case, but its use as an indicator of location suggests that it may well have been a more or less permanent fixture. A Ruthin maypole is similarly used as a geographical locator in a Great Sessions murder case in 1641, when the events leading to the death of William Lloyd occurred at the town's maypole in Talsarn Street (now Well Street).<sup>45</sup>

### *Bulls, bears, camels and Lords of Misrule*

Elizabeth I's 1572 statute concerning Rogues, Vagabonds and Sturdy Beggars was explicitly directed at 'Fencers Bearewardes Comon Players in Enterludes & Minstrels, not belonging to any Baron of this Realme or towards any other honorable Person of grater Degree'.<sup>46</sup> Bear-baiting seems to have been too expensive a proposition for early Wales; a series of presentments to the Denbighshire Court of Great Sessions in 1580 quotes the statute, citing the above passage in full, and indicts eleven persons, none of them for bearbaiting or otherwise exhibiting a bear. The situation is rather different with bull-baiting which, though it certainly had its recreational aspect as a spectator sport, was also considered to be necessary from a culinary point of view. No records of bull-baiting survive from Wales, but Swansea built a new bull-ring in 1619–20, paying for 'diging pavinge and setting vp of the boollring', as well as for a bolt and chain to hold the bull, and an 'owtfalle plank' for his removal. The bull-ring clearly saw frequent use, for the bolt and the block in which it was set were repaired in 1622–3, and the bull's collar was mended in 1628–9.<sup>47</sup>

It is likely that many aspects of urban recreation and entertainment will remain hidden to us since, as a normal part of everyday life, they were not sufficiently unusual to merit recording and any outlay of money associated with them was not on a level that required documentation. Occasionally, however, an unusual event breaks the surface of silence, especially (as with the Ruthin

and Ruabon maypoles) when it becomes involved, often peripherally, in an event which does require documentation. So a case brought before the Montgomeryshire Court of Great Sessions in 1598 was primarily concerned with the examination of a defendant accused of having cut one or more purses. The offence appears to have been committed in a Newtown alehouse, and the defendant identified the place as ‘wher the Camell was’, and provided as his alibi the claim that he was at the time of the alleged offence riding on the camel: ‘that he the said examenat went vpon the Camell & Contynewid vpon him the Most parte of his beinge in the Rome where the Camell was . . .’.<sup>48</sup> Although the presence of a camel in Newtown may seem far-fetched, they were hardly unknown, and the royal collection of animals frequently included at least one camel; the animals may also have travelled widely, since Henry VIII’s camelward was in Plymouth in 1520–1 (along with his camel).<sup>49</sup>

Many English towns included in their civic offices a semi-official position mandated to organize civic entertainment. Prior to the Reformation, such entertainments might well have centred around the Christmas/New Year season, or the carnival season leading up to Shrove Tuesday, though later on the association with the liturgical year was often lost.<sup>50</sup> Such an appointment seems to have been uniquely English, and there is no evidence of the position in a Welsh context with one exception. The sole survival of the municipal records for the highly anglicized borough of Beaumaris, Anglesey, is a small number of fragments from a corporation minute book. Only one of these contains a complete record, but it is of considerable importance, for it notes that in 1585 the mayor, bailiffs and burgesses agreed to relieve Richard Price of his burgage dues of ten shillings, ‘which is remitted him by the hole voyce in consideracion that he is lord of the mery pastymes’.<sup>51</sup> The fragmentary nature of the record means that even if it had included some description of Price’s duties, that is now lost to us, but it does seem clear that he is our sole representative of the Lord of Misrule in a Welsh town.

### *Conclusion*

Two facts govern all discussion of entertainment and recreation in early Wales. First, both record-keeping and record preservation in Welsh towns were often grossly inferior to that found in even small English boroughs. Very few civic accounts or corporation minute books survive, and the fate of the records of the Court of Great Sessions stands as an object lesson of how easily and quickly documents can be destroyed or lost.<sup>52</sup> The records for Caernarfonshire, for example, had been unceremoniously dumped in the Menai Strait, except for the slips of parchment on which bills of indictment and a few other records were written, which were sold to tailors to line shirt collars and cuffs.<sup>53</sup> The second critical fact is that the economic status of Welsh boroughs rarely approached that of even mid-level English towns. The economics of the Welsh boroughs stand in stark contrast to those of English towns and cities with a documented history of civicsupported recreation and entertainment, such as York, Norwich,

Chester, or even nearby Hereford.<sup>54</sup>

With these two caveats in mind, we can nonetheless see that the urban population of early Wales spent considerable effort in creating its own modes of entertainment, centred less on drama and more on music and dancing, and including a wide range of games (both 'lawful' and 'unlawful'). The very high proportion of events leading to appearances before the Court of Great Sessions which take place in alehouses, as well as continual civic concern with their licensing, gives strong evidence of the importance of such establishments in Welsh culture. George Owen's assessment, with which we began, was probably accurate from the point of view of a visitor accustomed to the range of entertainment available in many English towns, or a cultured and well-travelled Welshman, but the records (especially those few private journals and letter books which do survive) indicate that the urban Welsh were adept at finding and creating their own forms of recreation and entertainment.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Henry Owen (ed.), *The Description of Penbrokeshire by George Owen of Henllys, Lord of Kemes*, Cymmrodorion Record Series no. 1, part 4 (London, 1936), p. 691.

<sup>2</sup>B. G. Charles (ed.), *Calendar of the Records of the Borough of Haverfordwest* (Cardiff, 1967). On the historical context for these records, see Ralph A. Griffiths (ed.), *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales* (Cardiff, 1986).

<sup>3</sup>See Glyn Parry, *Guide to the Records of Great Sessions in Wales* (Aberystwyth, 1995), pp. xl–xlix, for an outline of the fate of the Court's records following its abolition in 1830. Although incomplete, the Great Sessions material remains a vast and intimidating archive, and Parry's *Guide* is by far the most useful aid to uncovering its riches. It is not, however, a calendar of the records, although some work has been done in that direction for the Montgomeryshire records. See Murray Chapman (ed.), *Montgomeryshire Court of Great Sessions: Calendar of Criminal Proceedings 1541–1570* (Aberystwyth, 2004).

<sup>4</sup>A. F. Johnston and Wim Hüskén (eds), *English Parish Drama*. Ludus 1 (Amsterdam, 1996).

<sup>5</sup>David Klausner (ed.), *Records of Early Drama: Wales* (Toronto, 2005), pp. 206–9.

<sup>6</sup>*Records of Early Drama: Wales*, p. 99.

<sup>7</sup>Records of post-Reformation Catholic drama in England indicate that the most frequent venue was a private house. See, for example, G. W. Boddy, 'Players of interludes in north Yorkshire in the early seventeenth century', *North Yorkshire County Record Office Journal*, 3 (1976), 95–130; and Hugh Aveling, *Northern Catholics: The Catholic Recusants of the North Riding of Yorkshire, 1558–1790* (London, 1966), pp. 288–91.

<sup>8</sup>Elizabeth Baldwin, Lawrence Clopper et al. (eds), *Records of Early English*

*Drama: Cheshire, including Chester* (Toronto, 2007), vol. 1, pp. 147–8.

<sup>9</sup>Gwenan Jones (ed.), *A Study of Three Welsh Religious Plays* (Bala, 1939), pp. 35–44.

<sup>10</sup>*Three Welsh Religious Plays*, p. 178. The translation is mine. See also Richard Beadle (ed.), *The York Plays*, EETS s.s. 23 (Oxford, 2009), pp. 332–41.

<sup>11</sup>*Three Welsh Religious Plays*, p. 134, p. 164.

<sup>12</sup>T. B., *The Rebellion of Naples, or The Tragedy of Massenello* (London, 1649), p. 73.

<sup>13</sup>Alfred Harbage lists it as ‘closet drama’. *Annals of English Drama, 975–1700* (Philadelphia, 1940).

<sup>14</sup>J. A. B. Somerset (ed.), *Records of Early English Drama: Shropshire* (Toronto, 1994), vol. 2, p. 387.

<sup>15</sup>*Records of Early Drama: Wales*, p. 197, p. 199.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>17</sup>National Library of Wales (NLW), Great Sessions 4/11/1/42–5.

<sup>18</sup>Elizabeth’s statute, though not specifically addressed to Wales, was not the first attempt to suppress performers in the Principality. A statute of Henry IV in 1402, in the midst of the Glyn Dŵr rebellion, clearly acknowledged the power of native Welsh poetry and music: ‘Item pur eschuir pluseurs diseases & meschiefs qont aduenuz deuant ces heures en la terre de Gales par pluseurs westours Rymours Ministrallx & autres vacabondes ordeigne est & establiz que nul westour Rymour Ministrall ne vacabond soit acunement sustenuz en la terre de Gales pur faire kymorthas ou coillage sur la comune poeple illeokes . . .’ [Likewise, to avoid many troubles and misfortunes that have come about before now in the land of Wales on account of many jongleurs, rhymers, minstrels, and other vagabonds, it is ordained and established that no jongleur, rhymers, minstrel, nor vagabond shall be supported in any way in the land of Wales by imposing comorthas or a collection upon the common people there . . .] *Records of Early Drama: Wales*, text p. 28, translation p. 327.

<sup>19</sup>*Records of Early Drama: Wales*, p. 106; see also pp. 129, 158, 190, 246–8.

<sup>20</sup>The accounts of William Lewis of Prysaeddfed, Anglesey, also record payments to *crwth* and harp players. *Records of Early Drama: Wales*, p. 52, pp. 153–5. See also David Klausner, ‘Family entertainments among the Salusburys of Lleweni, Denbighshire and their circle, 1595–1641’, *Welsh Music History/Hanes Cerddoriaeth Cymru*, 6 (2004), 129–54.

<sup>21</sup>*Records of Early Drama: Wales*, pp. 54–5. See also Sally Harper, ‘Music in the commonplace book of Phillip Powell of Brecon (c. 1630–35)’, in Sally Harper and Wyn Thomas (eds), *Cynheilïaid y Gân/Bearers of Song: Essays in Honour of Phyllis Kinney and Meredydd Evans* (Cardiff, 2007), pp. 116–44.

<sup>22</sup>*Records of Early Drama: Wales*, p. 242.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., pp. 140, 152, 204, 210.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., pp. 120, 201, 244, 268.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 224.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., pp. 255–6.

<sup>27</sup>On the instrumentation of the York and Norwich waits, see A. F. Johnston and Margaret Rogerson (eds), *Records of Early English Drama: York* (Toronto, 1979), vol. 1, pp. 347, 349, 363, 499; and David Galloway (ed.), *Records of Early English Drama: Norwich 1540–1642* (Toronto, 1984), p. xl.

<sup>28</sup>See the Cadw website at <http://www.cadw.wales.gov.uk/default.asp?id=305> (accessed 25 September 2010).

<sup>29</sup>*Records of Early Drama: Wales*, p. 59.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., pp. 67, 69, 74. ‘Pricksong’ is simply musical notation; Jones’s point is that the girls will learn their instruments better if they can read music, rather than learning pieces by ear alone.

<sup>31</sup>David Klausner, ‘The Statute of Gruffudd ap Cynan/Statud Gruffudd ap Cynan’, *Welsh Music History/Hanes Cerddoriaeth Cymru*, 3 (1999), 282–98; *Records of Early Drama: Wales*, pp. 159–65 and 349–56.

<sup>32</sup>*Records of Early Drama: Wales*, pp. 106–10.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., pp. 52–3.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 155; see also Sally Harper, *Music in Welsh Culture before 1650: A Study of the Principal Sources* (Aldershot, 2007), pp. 319–26.

<sup>35</sup>*Records of Early Drama: Wales*, pp. 210–14 and 372–6.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 151.

<sup>37</sup>Robert Bulkeley of Dronwy, Anglesey, records games of mumchance in his journal. *Records of Early Drama: Wales*, p. 51.

<sup>38</sup>NLW Great Sessions 4/1/2/37; 4/716/3.

<sup>39</sup>NLW 1610, pt ii, pp. 1–2.

<sup>40</sup>Glamorgan Archives, B/Cow 1, mb 4, #19.

<sup>41</sup>‘The Kings Maiesties Declaration to his Subiects, concerning lawfull Sports to be vsed’, STC 9238.9 (London, 1618), p. 7.

<sup>42</sup>Bwlchycibau is about five and a half miles from the Herefordshire border; Caersŵs about twice that. On morris dancing in Herefordshire, see David Klausner (ed.), *Records of Early English Drama: Herefordshire and Worcestershire* (Toronto, 1990), pp. 14–15.

<sup>43</sup>*Records of Early Drama: Wales*, pp. 136–8.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., pp. 124–6.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., pp. 128, 131–5.

<sup>46</sup>*Statutes of the Realm*, 11 vols (London, 1810–1828), vol. 4, pt 1, p. 591.

<sup>47</sup>*Records of Early Drama: Wales*, pp. 207–9.

<sup>48</sup>*Records of Early Drama: Wales*, p. 242.

<sup>49</sup>The royal collection is described by Daniel Hahn, *The Tower Menagerie* (London, 2003), p. 14, p. 107; in 1623 a gift to Charles I from the king of Spain included five camels. For the payment to Henry VIII's camelward, see John Wasson (ed.), *Records of Early English Drama: Devon* (Toronto, 1986), pp. 220–1.

<sup>50</sup>On the widespread appointment of a Lord of Misrule in English towns, see Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year 1400–1700* (Oxford, 1994), *passim*.

<sup>51</sup>*Records of Early Drama: Wales*, p. 42.

<sup>52</sup>On the history of the Great Sessions records, see *Records of Early Drama: Wales*, pp. cii–ciii. The Parliamentary Act abolishing the Court in 1830 created a perfect scenario for archival disaster by placing responsibility for keeping the records of the Court in the hands of those who had that responsibility prior to the Court's abolition, but providing no funding for this purpose.

<sup>53</sup>*First Report of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records* (London, 1840), Appendix, no. 31, 97.

<sup>54</sup>David Klausner, 'English economies and Welsh realities: drama in early Wales', in Ruth Kennedy and Simon Meecham-Jones (eds), *Authority and Subjugation in Writing of Medieval Wales* (New York/London, 2008), pp. 213–29.



## The Welsh Diaspora in Early Tudor English Towns

**Peter Fleming**

Wales has experienced immigration from across its border with England since at least the eleventh century. Some of this has been the result of conquest and other forms of violence, but not all, and peaceful settlement has had an important influence on the nature of Welsh society. Over the same period there was a reciprocal movement, as Welsh men and women moved east, to create a diaspora in England.

This process has attracted attention from historians since at least 1968, when Glanmor Williams delivered ‘The Welsh in Tudor England’, a lecture published in 1979. Williams’ work dealt mainly with prominent individual Welshmen, and a very few women, whose careers in England he explored with his customary scholarship and elegance.<sup>1</sup> Since 1984, the subject has been pursued by Ralph Griffiths with three wide-ranging studies of Anglo-Welsh relations in the later Middle Ages.<sup>2</sup> Griffiths has shown that whatever shadow the early fifteenth-century revolt of Owain Glyn Dŵr may have cast over Anglo-Welsh relations in the short term, it did not generally last much beyond the mid-century. The Welsh presence was widespread at most levels of English society well before the accession of Henry Tudor, although during his reign Welshmen do seem to have enjoyed a new prominence in England. Griffiths, like Williams before him, has adopted a broad-brush approach, drawing upon a wide range of sources to survey the Welsh diaspora across the realm. A different perspective was afforded by a collection of studies published in 2001, *The Welsh in London, 1500–2000*, edited by Emrys Jones. Two of the essays in this volume, by Jones and W. P. Griffith, discussed the Welsh in early-modern London.<sup>3</sup> Apart from this, studies of the Welsh diaspora in particular medieval and early-modern towns have been rare.<sup>4</sup> The present essay uses the evidence of the early Tudor subsidies to ask some basic questions about the Welsh presence in five urban settlements in the English West Country and West Midlands: the towns of Shrewsbury, Gloucester and Bristol, and the cities of Hereford and Worcester. For many Welsh migrants heading east, these would have been the first large English towns they encountered. Using taxation assessments, the essay aims to determine what proportion of these towns’ population was made up of those of Welsh descent, and to explore their socio-economic position within each community.

The five towns occupy an English region that borders south and central Wales; it is a region whose characteristics owe much to the river systems of the

Severn and, to a lesser extent, the Wye.<sup>5</sup> These waterways provided major routes through the region, and into Wales, and the contrasting agricultural regimes either side of the Severn provided a combination of highland and lowland, pastoral and arable, that supplied a rich and stable economic base for the growth of towns. The fact that the West Midlands was among the most urbanized of English regions owes much to this hinterland. The five towns were the most important settlements within this region, east of the Welsh Marches and south of Chester. Bristol must be counted as pre-eminent among these towns: it dominated the southern half of the Anglo-Welsh border, it was by far the largest of the towns of the English West Country and West Midlands (its population was more than twice that of any of the other four towns discussed here), and in many ways it acted as the metropolis of south-east Wales. Thirty-five miles up the Severn valley, Gloucester enjoyed a healthy trade in Welsh cattle and cloth, and its situation at the lowest bridging point of the Severn was of great economic importance, but it was suffering decline in the early sixteenth century. To the north-west, Hereford enjoyed, 'a unique position as a long-established Episcopal, commercial and political centre at a convergence of routes leading into Wales'.<sup>6</sup> Worcester was an important staging post on the cattle-droving route out of Wales, and prospered from textiles, as did Shrewsbury, which effectively controlled the wool trade in the central borderlands between England and Wales.

The tax returns used in this study are those for the 1524 lay subsidy collections for Bristol, Gloucester, Hereford and Shrewsbury, and the 1525 collection for Worcester (the 1524 returns for this city being inadequate).<sup>7</sup> The Tudor subsidies began to be levied in this form from 1512, but these are the earliest returns that give sufficient detail and have survived in sufficient number. This is the earliest category of taxation record that identifies individuals and assigns them a valuation based on their property or income. Earlier taxes, such as the fifteenths and tenths, had been set at a standard rate per community since the early fourteenth century, and so were not imposed on a person-by-person basis, while the poll taxes levied later in the century do not survive in sufficient numbers and detail for these five towns. The 1524/5 subsidy (imposed by an Act of 1523) was supposed to be levied on individuals worth at least forty shillings (£2) in terms of annual property value, or income from wages worth twenty shillings (£1) or more. The valuation was, broadly speaking, divided between property, defined as land or goods, and wages. The latter could cover household servants as well as journeymen, labourers and other non-domestic employees. Masters paid for their servants, and so it was unnecessary to record their full names: hence, many household servants are simply referred to by their Christian names. There was considerable initial variation in the practice of the commissioners to assess the tax, to the extent that in February 1524 a revised and clarified set of instructions had to be issued, called the Memorial. After this there was more uniformity, but local

variations persisted. A common deviation from the statutory charges was to tax property from twenty shillings rather than forty. This practice appears to have been adopted in all five towns, and so does not cause problems in interpreting the valuations. The post-Memorial assessments have been used in all cases. Analysis of this material for this region has been made much easier by the painstaking work of Michael Faraday, who has edited the early Tudor subsidy returns for Bristol, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Shropshire. The present essay is based on his editions. In his Bristol and Gloucestershire volume, Faraday commented briefly on the Welsh presence in this area, based on counting the incidence of Welsh personal names among the assessed. This essay takes that approach much further, and applies it to all five major towns.

The individuals discussed in this analysis are those who had recognizably Welsh names, usually as family names, but occasionally as first names, such as Dafydd.<sup>8</sup> What counts as a Welsh name requires some explanation. The easiest type to identify is that of the traditional Welsh patronymic, using *ap* (*ab* before vowels) from *mab*, indicating ‘son of’, and *merch* or *ferch*, ‘daughter of’, followed by the father’s baptismal name. Common in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was the elision of the *ap/ab* with the following name to produce such familiar forms as Parry, Price and Bevan. Nicknames, such as *bychan/fychan*, ‘lesser’, or ‘junior’, or *coch/goch*, ‘red (haired)’, are also distinctive, even when partially anglicized into Vaughan or Gough respectively. This period also saw the growing use of the father’s baptismal name as the family name, either on its own or with a form of the English genitive, as Williams, Evans or Jones. A Shrewsbury example is Elis Jones, son of John ap Dykus, from near Wrexham, admitted to the Drapers’ Guild in 1504.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, the patronymic system itself was breaking down, with all of these naming forms increasingly inherited down the generations as surnames, in a fashion that had been common in England since the mid-fourteenth century, or adopted from their husbands by married women. In addition, the gender distinction between *ap/ab* and *ferch/merch* was sometimes ignored, so that one finds ‘Joan ap Rhys’, widow, a wealthy Bristol taxpayer in 1524.<sup>10</sup> These trends probably reflect a society increasingly characterized on the one hand by a bureaucracy dependent on written records, and on the other by a system of inheritance based on primogeniture. Both could be seen as products of English influence, but it would be an over-simplification to assume that the loss, or even misapplication, of the patronymic system corresponded to the loss of the Welsh language.

The increasing adoption of inherited surnames among the Welsh means that a linguistically Welsh surname does not necessarily indicate that either its bearer or that individual’s father or grandfather were born in Wales. However, it is unlikely that the generational distance between an individual bearing a Welsh surname and his or her Welsh ancestor was as great in the early sixteenth century as it often is today. Obviously, the use of inherited surnames

had been a more recent historical phenomenon in the former period, giving scope for fewer generations to carry the same name, but even so this could still amount to a considerable distance in time, generations and culture between Welsh origin and residence in England, thereby extinguishing any meaningful Welsh identity. A more important consideration is that few urban families, even among the civic elite, managed to survive over more than three generations after first establishing themselves as residents. This was the observation of William Caxton, and it has been largely borne out by historians.<sup>11</sup> Hence, most of those bearing Welsh names in the 1524/5 subsidy returns are likely to have been first- or second-generation residents. However, this still does not mean that their previous abode before settling in town was in Wales: some, doubtless, came to an English town from a previous residence in a surrounding English county. Tracing the genealogy of everyone assessed in 1524/5 is impossible, and so we cannot establish whose family came to an English town from Wales directly or as the result of step migration via another part of England.<sup>12</sup>

There is another fundamental question that has to be asked: what does being 'Welsh' mean in this context? The Welsh as a group, like anyone else, did not have one homogeneous genetic make-up. Given the long history of outside settlement into Wales, particularly along the border and south coast, some of those residents of English towns born in Wales or of Welsh ancestry would have been descended from foreign settlers. Most of the more recent ones would have been English, but others would have been Irish or even French or Flemish.<sup>13</sup> However, such questions of ancestry are of no real importance in this study in themselves, since a distant migrant ancestry is unlikely to influence an individual's sense of identity. What is important is the degree to which individuals regarded themselves as being Welsh.

There is likely to have been considerable variation between individuals' attitudes, dependent on a number of factors. One of these might be the original place of residence within Wales, in terms of whether the individual was an urban or a rural dweller. The vast majority of Welsh towns originated as English settlements. The Welsh were initially prevented from settling in these foreign enclaves, but, as Griffiths and Dimmock have shown, this separation had largely broken down by the later fifteenth century.<sup>14</sup> Hence, it is unlikely that by the early sixteenth century Welsh towns were any longer bastions of English ethnicity and culture.<sup>15</sup> This is particularly important in the case of Bristol and Gloucester, which probably drew much of their Welsh population from the towns of south Wales.<sup>16</sup> The lines of ethnic and cultural difference had also been blurred for some time in rural north Wales, to judge by those English settlers in Dyffryn Clwyd who had adopted Welsh patronymics as early as the fourteenth century.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, despite what was doubtless a complex soup of DNA, we can be reasonably confident that those born and raised in Wales from about the fourteenth century did, generally, have some share of a common Welsh cultural identity. What constituted that identity remains a moot

point. Language is the most obvious factor. There doubtless existed a spectrum of linguistic practice among the inhabitants of Wales, ranging from monolingualism in Welsh (the majority, perhaps), through bilingualism in Welsh and English (a large minority?), to monolingualism in English (a smaller minority?).<sup>18</sup> What that spectrum would have looked like among Welsh settlers in our five English towns is a very interesting question, but one that this present survey cannot hope to answer.

These ambiguities over who were Welsh and what constituted Welshness might appear to be fatal flaws in the methodology of this analysis. However, as will become apparent, the group identified as 'Welsh' on the basis of personal name evidence exhibits sufficient shared characteristics, distinguishing them from the rest of the assessed population, to indicate that, on the whole, its members did have shared experiences and something in common that set them apart. So, while an unquantifiable proportion of those identified as 'Welsh' in this analysis would not have been born in Wales and would perhaps not have thought of themselves as anything but English, the characteristics of the wider group of 'Welsh' name-bearers suggest that, predominantly, these individuals did regard themselves, and were regarded, as Welsh. From now on, those identified with Welsh names will be described, for simplicity's sake, as 'Welsh' or 'the Welsh', on the understanding that the caveats raised above are always taken into account. Also, those not identified as Welsh will be described as English, even though a very small number of these would have been aliens or Irish.

The first and most basic question that might be asked of the evidence from the 1524/5 subsidy returns concerns the total number of Welsh in the overall population of each town. However, this simple question cannot be answered with any certainty. For one thing, nothing can be known about the poorest members of society, that is, those whose property or wages amounted to less than 20s. a year, since the assessors did not record this group. In addition, only the heads of households, or their servants, were assessed: wives and children were omitted. As a lay subsidy, this tax also omits the clergy. There was also likely to have been a high level of tax evasion. What sort of multiplier should be used to compensate for the unassessed must be educated guesswork, but a figure of six to seven is usually favoured.<sup>19</sup> Such a multiplier can be used to arrive at an estimate of total population, but to do so in the context of this enquiry we would have to assume that the proportion of poor (that is, those judged to fall below the taxation limit) was the same within both the English and Welsh populations, and there is no way of knowing if this were the case. Consequently, this study begins by asking what were the proportions of English and Welsh taxpayers within the five towns.

Table 12.1 The five towns assessed in 1524/5

		Shrewsbury	Worcester	Hereford	Gloucester	Bristol	Totals
Welsh property	value	255.65	235.00	766.64	418	1821.32	3496.61
	number	73	30	97	44	159	403
English property	value	1069.61	2014.31	2132.37	2392.13	7351.11	14959.53
	number	170	236	237	273	634	1550
Welsh	waged-number	26	24	80	10	51	191
English	waged-number	54	202	181	63	160	660
Other	Un-named waged-number	13	3	8	0	4	28
	unvalued propertied - Welsh	3	0	0	0	0	3
	unvalued propertied - English	12	1	0	0	2	15
Total value of property		1325.26	2249.31	2899.01	2810.13	9172.43	18456.14
total no. property holders		258	267	334	317	795	1971
total no. of waged		93	229	269	73	215	879
total no. of Welsh		102	54	177	54	210	597
total no. of English		236	439	418	336	796	2229
total population		351	496	603	390	1010	2850
% of total population = Welsh		30.17	10.88	29.74	13.84	20.79	20.94
mean value £	Welsh property	3.50	7.83	7.90	9.5	11.45	8.67
	English property	6.29	8.53	8.99	8.76	11.59	9.65
	all property	5.45	8.45	8.67	8.86	11.56	9.36

Table 12.1b The five towns assessed in 1524/5

		Shrewsbury	Worcester	Hereford	Gloucester	Bristol	Totals
% of property held by Welsh		19.29	10.44	26.44	14.87	19.85	18.94
% of property holders = Welsh		28.29	11.23	29.04	13.88	20.05	20.44
% of Welsh = waged		25.49	44.44	45.19	18.51	24.28	31.99
% of English = waged		22.88	46.01	43.30	18.75	20.00	29.60
% of waged = Welsh		32.50	10.48	30.65	13.69	24.17	22.44
% of total population = waged		26.49	46.16	44.61	18.71	21.48	30.84

As [Table 12.1](#) shows, over the five towns as a whole the Welsh constituted a little over 20 per cent of the total taxpaying population, but there are considerable variations between towns.<sup>20</sup> Shrewsbury and Hereford, with around 30 per cent of their taxpaying population identified as Welsh, contrast with Worcester and Gloucester, where the Welsh constitute only a little more than 10 per cent.<sup>21</sup> Bristol is between these two extremes, but much closer to Shrewsbury and Hereford than to Worcester and Gloucester. To some degree this can easily be explained by looking at a modern map of Britain. Both Shrewsbury and Hereford are within twenty miles of the Welsh border by road, while Worcester is over twice as far from Wales. However, Gloucester is only about twenty miles from Monmouth, the nearest Welsh town, so its relatively smaller Welsh population cannot be explained simply by reference to distance. Perhaps Bristol, a much bigger town with greater opportunities and easier links with the major towns of the south Wales coast, captured many of the migrants who might otherwise have gone to Gloucester. Given this observation, it is equally unsurprising that the proportion of Welsh property holders is higher in Hereford, Shrewsbury and Bristol than in Worcester and Gloucester.

The Welsh proportion of these towns' waged taxpaying populations is broadly in line with this pattern, in that Shrewsbury and Hereford have the highest share of their non-propertied taxpayers constituted by the Welsh, Gloucester and Worcester the lowest, with Bristol in between. This reflects the relative size both of the five towns' Welsh populations and of their nonpropertied taxpaying populations. In short, there seems to be no clear difference between the proportion of Welsh and English assessed populations



constituted by waged and propertied in the five towns. However, a more interesting finding relates to the proportion of property by value held by the Welsh. In the two towns with the largest numbers of Welsh relative to overall population, Shrewsbury and Hereford, the average value of an individual Welsh taxpayer's property holding is lower than that of his or her English equivalent; in the case of Shrewsbury, the difference is particularly marked. Here, the average Welsh holding is only 56 per cent that of the average English; the equivalent figure for Hereford is 88 per cent, and for Bristol 99 per cent, so in this latter case there is approximate equality. Gloucester goes beyond this parity, and the average English holding is only 92 per cent of the Welsh equivalent. In short, Shrewsbury and Hereford had relatively larger numbers of Welsh property holders than the other towns, but they were, on average, comparatively poorer.

This finding seems to suggest either that the Welsh attracted to Shrewsbury and Hereford, but particularly the former, were in some way different to those who settled in the other towns, or that they were treated differently once they arrived. The five towns certainly had different catchment areas. Bristol and Gloucester looked towards south-east Wales, the area drained by the Wye and lower Severn, and the south coast. Within this area lay the towns of Newport, Cardiff, Swansea, Carmarthen and Tenby, and thus by far the largest concentration of medieval Wales's urban population. By contrast, Hereford, Worcester and Shrewsbury faced towards mid-Wales, a much more sparsely settled region, where English cultural, social and, to some extent, political and administrative values, practices and loyalties tended to be much less firmly rooted. Perhaps the average Welsh migrant to Bristol and Gloucester was wealthier, more likely to come from an urban, commercial environment, and more familiar with English culture and language, than his or her equivalent in the other three towns. Proximity may also have played its part in influencing the nature, as well as the number, of Welsh migrants. Worcester, much further away than Shrewsbury or Hereford, may have been an option only for the wealthier or more enterprising Welsh migrant.

The difference in average wealth between English and Welsh in Hereford seems to have been given political expression in the mid-fifteenth century. At this time, the city experienced the sort of tension between a governing mercantile oligarchy and the lesser elite, made up of tradesmen and craftsmen, that was common in later medieval towns. In this instance, however, the mercantile faction was known as the 'English', and their less wealthy and prestigious opponents the 'Welsh'. These factions were not strictly ethnic, since many of the 'Welsh' faction bore English names, but the use of these terms suggests that there was a widely held assumption that the city's socioeconomic divisions had an ethnic dimension.<sup>22</sup>

We are able to analyse Shrewsbury's taxpayers in more detail than in most of the other five towns, since the 1524 assessment divided the taxpaying

population into those who were members of craft guilds and those who were not, with the former being assessed in their guilds, and the latter in their wards.<sup>23</sup> [Table 12.2](#) shows the Shrewsbury results in more detail.

In Shrewsbury, the Welsh were not strongly identified with particular trades, but while individual Welsh are found enjoying relatively high levels of wealth in most of the guilds, there is a preponderance of Welsh members in the poorer guilds. Ranking the guilds by total average per capita wealth, as assessed on goods and land, gives the wealthiest seven guilds as, in descending order, the Mercers, Drapers, Bakers, Butchers, Glovers, Fletchers, Bowyers and Coopers, and Barkers; and the poorest seven as the Barbers, Cordoners, Smiths, Saddlers and Painters, Tailors, Weavers, and Carpenters and Tilers.<sup>24</sup> Out of the total number of propertied Welsh guild members, 40.42 per cent appear in the top seven guilds and 59.57 per cent in the bottom seven. There is a noticeably smaller proportion of Welsh representation in the Mercers' guild, by far the wealthiest of the Shrewsbury guilds. The relative scarcity of Welsh mercers is particularly striking given the large Welsh presence among the drapers, weavers and tailors, doubtless reflecting the importance to Shrewsbury of its trade in Welsh cloth.<sup>25</sup> However, the Welsh are also underrepresented in the very poorest guilds. In short, the Welsh tend to be most heavily represented among the middling ranks of guild members. The data provided by the assessment of non-guild members in Shrewsbury's three wards are represented in [Table 12.3](#).

Table 12.2 Shrewsbury craft guilds, 1524

Craft Guild	Guild members = Welsh, including waged		Guild members = Welsh, excluding waged		% share of guild wealth (assessed on goods and land)	Average per capita wealth (goods and land): Welsh, in £	Average per capita wealth (goods and land): English, in £	Average per capita wealth (goods and land): all, in £
	no.	%	no.	%				
Mercers	05	15.78	04	20.00	3.32	4.25	20.58	18.24
Drapers	04	42.85	03	8.46	41.43	8.86	7.83	8.15
Bakers	10	43.47	04	45.00	52.00	7.42	5.33	6.25
Butchers	04	33.33	02	50.00	23.18	4.00	6.62	5.75
Glovers	01	7.69	01	7.69	7.00	5.00	5.52	5.48
Fletchers, Bowyers, Coopers	01	16.66	01	20.00	30.74	6.66	5.00	5.41
Barkers	06	46.15	04	40.00	50.31	6.58	4.33	5.23
Barbers	02	18.18	02	20.00	14.63	3.00	4.37	4.1
Cordoners	09	25.00	04	8.88	17.75	2.50	3.12	3.01
Smiths	02	22.22	02	33.33	31.57	3.00	2.16	2.37
Saddlers, Painters	01	25.00	01	40.00	14.28	2.00	2.40	2.33
Tailors	12	52.17	10	50.00	45.00	1.80	2.20	2.00
Weavers	15	44.11	08	34.78	34.77	1.66	1.66	1.66
Carpenters, Tilers	02	16.66	01	14.28	12.50	1.00	1.16	1.14
Totals	74		47					

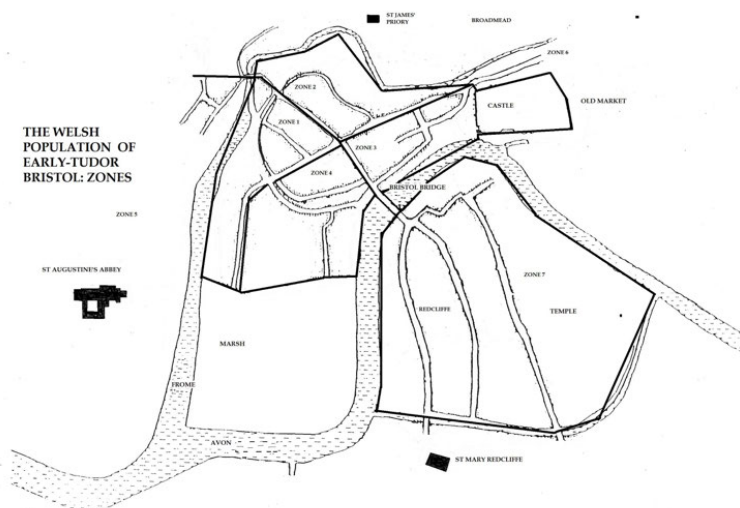
Among this group, with 37.25 per cent of the propertied population, the Welsh have only a 19.23 per cent share of the total wealth, and the average Welsh property holding is only 40.19 per cent that of the average English holding. Putting together those assessed in guilds and in the wards, it appears that 81.17 per cent of the English assessed on property were guild members, as against only 73.97 per cent of the Welsh propertied.

Table 12.3 Shrewsbury non-guild members by wards

Ward	Propertied (assessed on goods and lands)			Waged
	Number	Total Value (£)	Average (mean)	Number
<i>Stone Ward</i>				
Welsh	1	1	1	0
English	6	10	1.66	0
<i>Welsh Ward</i>				
Welsh	15	25	1.66	0
English	11	43.33	3.93	0
<i>Castle Ward</i>				
Welsh	3	6	2	4
English	15	81	5.4	10
<i>Totals</i>				
Welsh	19	32	1.68	4
English	32	134.33	4.18	10

In addition to the assessments by guilds and by wards, there is also a collection list for the Welsh Ward. This is a list of all of the ward taxpayers, including both guild members and non-members, but without valuations. Of those assessed, the surnames of 24 waged were not recorded and so it is impossible to know if they were English or Welsh. Of those who could be so identified, 113 (68.07 per cent of those identified) were English, and 53 (31.92 per cent) were Welsh. This is almost exactly the same proportion as for Shrewsbury as a whole. If the Welsh Ward had ever been a Welsh ghetto, then it had certainly lost that character by the early sixteenth century. Reviewing all of the Shrewsbury evidence, it is clear that its Welsh population was well assimilated in the sense that it was represented spatially fairly evenly throughout the town and in socio-economic terms throughout the guilds, but with a noticeable tendency to bunch towards the middling crafts. However, those Welsh who were not guild members were considerably disadvantaged relative to their English counterparts, and this phenomenon goes much of the way towards explaining the overall relative poverty of the Welsh compared to the Shrewsbury English.

The question of spatial distribution can be addressed in much more detail in Bristol, since here the assessors grouped taxpayers by streets within the wards. For this study, the returns for each street have been grouped into seven zones, as shown on [Map 12.1](#).



Map 12.1 The Welsh population of early-Tudor Bristol: zones

Table 12.4 Bristol, 1524

		Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4	Zone 5	Zone 6	Zone 7	Totals
Welsh property	value	212.00	357.00	618.00	337.00	15.00	166.00	116.32	1821.32
	number	13	26	25	21	8	29	37	159
English property	value	1597.00	847.49	1974.98	986.00	142.00	685.33	1118.31	7351.11
	number	75	120	99	61	39	89	151	634
Welsh	waged - number	1	2	12	5	3	14	14	51
English	waged - number	6	16	53	10	10	41	24	160
other - number		2 <sup>1</sup>	0	3 <sup>2</sup>	0	0	0	1 <sup>3</sup>	6
total value of property		1809.00	1204.49	2592.98	1323.00	157.00	851.33	1234.63	9172.43
total no. property holders		89	146	125	82	47	118	188	795
total no. of waged		8	18	67	15	13	55	39	215
total no. of Welsh		14	28	37	26	11	43	51	210
total no. of English		82	136	153	71	49	130	175	796
total population		97	164	192	97	60	173	227	1010
% of total population = Welsh		14.43	17.07	19.27	26.80	18.33	24.85	22.46	20.79

Table 12.4b Bristol, 1524									
		Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4	Zone 5	Zone 6	Zone 7	Totals
mean value	Welsh property	16.30	13.73	24.72	16.04	1.87	5.72	3.14	11.45
	English property	21.29	7.06	19.94	16.16	3.64	7.70	7.40	11.59
	all property	20.55	8.24	20.91	16.13	3.34	7.21	6.56	11.56
% of property held by Welsh		11.71	29.63	23.83	25.47	9.55	19.49	9.42	19.85
% of property holders = Welsh		14.77	17.80	20.16	25.60	17.00	24.57	19.68	20.05
% of Welsh = waged		7.14	7.14	32.43	19.23	27.27	32.55	27.45	24.28
% of English = waged		7.31	11.76	34.64	14.08	20.40	31.53	16.63	20.00
% of waged = Welsh		12.50	11.11	18.46	33.33	23.07	25.45	36.84	24.05
% of total population = waged		8.24	10.97	33.85	15.46	21.66	31.79	16.74	20.99

<sup>1</sup>One un-named wage-earner; one property holder with no valuation.

<sup>2</sup>Two un-named wage-earners, one property-holder with no valuation.

<sup>3</sup>One un-named servant.

Bristol originated as a late Saxon *burh* divided into four quarters by its four main streets that came together in a central crossing. This settlement was bound on three sides by the rivers Frome and Avon. The first four zones cover this central area and correspond to the quarters of the old town, with extensions eastwards to cover the Marsh between the town wall and the Frome. This central area was dominated by merchants and wealthier retailers. The other three zones cover the northern, eastern and southern suburbs. The north-west suburb (zone 5) is dominated by religious houses, primarily St Augustine's Abbey; the north-eastern (zone 6) includes the priory of St James but also Old Market and Broadmead, two commercial developments of the central Middle Ages. The castle, occupying a large area to the southeast of the centre, was by this time probably virtually empty, and as Crown property was not included in the assessment. The third suburb (zone 7) is made up of Temple and Redcliffe, industrial areas particularly associated with textile production.<sup>26</sup> Table 12.4 presents the Bristol data broken down into these zones.

As we have seen, around one-quarter of Bristol's assessed population had names that suggest Welsh ancestry.<sup>27</sup> There is considerable variation in the average value of Welsh property holdings as a percentage of English property holdings between the zones. The average Welsh property holding, as a percentage of the English, from lowest to highest, is as follows (zone number followed by percentage): 7 (42.43); 5 (51.37); 6 (74.28); 1 (76.5); 4 (99.25); 3 (123.97); 2 (194.47). Zones 2, 3 and 4, as well as having the largest average Welsh holdings proportionate to English, also have the highest percentage of property held by Welsh, equal to, or higher than, the average English holdings. Zones 3, 4 and 6 have the highest percentage of Welsh property holders, while zones 4, 6, 7 have the highest Welsh share of population. Zone 4 is the only one to feature in all the top three in these indicators of Welsh wealth and population: here, the Welsh have the highest share of population, the second highest share of property value, and the highest share of property holders.

However, there is a considerable range (the difference between lowest and highest valuation) across the zones, as indicated in [Table 12.5](#).

Table 12.5 Bristol zones by range						
Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4	Zone 5	Zone 6	Zone 7
79	179	179	199	5	49	12

While zones 5 and 7 have a much more evenly distributed spread of wealth, the others have a small number of relatively very wealthy Welsh property holders (assessed on £50 or more of property). They are listed below, with their place of residence and assessed wealth:

Zone 1:	William ap Howell, merchant, Corn Street, £80 <sup>28</sup>
Zone 2:	John Williams, butcher, Wine Street, £180; <sup>29</sup> Margery Mathew, Broad Street, £80 <sup>30</sup>
Zone 3:	David Laurence, High Street, £140; John Edwards, brewer, St Mary le Port Street, £180; <sup>31</sup> William Vaughan, Bristol Bridge, £80 <sup>32</sup>
Zone 4:	Joan ap Rhys, Back, £200
Zone 6:	Henry Kemys, gentleman, Old Market, £50 <sup>33</sup>



Table 12.6 Bristol zones range adjusted

		Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4	Zone 5	Zone 6	Zone 7
Welsh property	Adjusted value	132.00	97.00	218.00	137.00	15.00	116.00	116.32
	Adjusted number	12	24	22	20	8	28	37
Adjusted mean value	Welsh property	11.00	4.04	9.90	6.85	1.87	4.14	3.14
Unadjusted mean value	Welsh property	16.30	13.73	24.72	16.04	1.87	5.72	3.14
% difference		5.3	9.69	14.82	9.19	0	1.58	0

Williams, Laurence, Edwards, and ap Rhys were among the wealthiest twenty Bristol property holders assessed in 1524.<sup>34</sup> Removing these very wealthy individuals gives the adjusted figures shown in [Table 12.6](#).

Zone 3 is the most affected by this adjustment, followed by zones 2 and 4. On the basis of these figures, while the importance of zones 2 to 4 is diminished somewhat, zones 1, 3 and 4 continue to appear dominant. However, zone 1 needs to be put in the context of its overall high property valuations, and a lower Welsh share of its overall property valuation than zones 2, 3 and 4. In this light, zones 3 and 4, constituting the area adjoining the north bank of the Avon, emerge as the neighbourhood where the Welsh presence is likely to have been most significant. The contrast between a relatively wealthy Welsh population in the town centre and a relatively poor one in the suburbs remains clear.

Turning from those assessed on property to wage-earners, a distinction has been made between those identified as the servants of a named individual property holder, and those simply listed as waged, with no indication of a master. While no reason is given by the assessors for this different treatment of the two groups, it is reasonable to assume that in most cases the latter were not employed as household servants or journeymen, but operated as semi-independent, casual, or freelance industrial workers or labourers. The results of this disaggregation are shown in [Table 12.7](#), for all of those assessed on wages, both English and Welsh.

**Table 12.7 English and Welsh assessed as waged**

Zone	All servants of named individuals		All other waged	
	No.	% of total waged in zone	No.	% of total waged in zone
1	7	87.5	1	12.5
2	16	88.8	2	11.11
3	65	97.01	2	2.98
4	15	100.00	0	00.00
5	131	100.00	0	00.00
6	502	90.90	5	9.09
7	8	20.51	31	79.48

<sup>1</sup>This number includes ten servants of St Augustine's Abbey and two of the Hospital of St Mark.

<sup>2</sup>This number includes four servants of St James's Priory.

Zone 5, after deducting servants of religious houses, has only one servant. The small number of non-servant wage-earners in zones 1 to 3 were probably employed in the wharves of the Frome quayside and the butchers' shambles fronting the Avon. Industrial concerns such as brewers and tanners probably employed the five wage-earners found in zone 6.<sup>35</sup> These employers appear very small-scale, although we should remember that the poorest would have escaped assessment and hence not appear in the records.

By contrast, zone 7, Redcliffe and Temple, stands out as home to a sizeable group of non-servant wage-earners, with 13.65 per cent of its population made up of a wage-earning 'proletariat', reflecting the character of this suburb as an industrial, predominantly textile, area. In this zone, nearly half of the non-servant wage-earners were Welsh (14 out of 31), and they constituted the entirety of the zone's Welsh waged population: there were no Welsh attached servants. This zone, with 24.28 per cent of Bristol's Welsh population, has the second-lowest average Welsh property holding, at £3.14, and the lowest average Welsh property holding as a percentage of the average English holding.

Exactly half of Bristol's Welsh assessed population lived in the poorer zones in the suburbs (zones 5–7); their average property holding was £2.83, 16.32 per cent that of the overall average Welsh property holding. This was a very different Welsh community from that in the town centre (zones 1–4). The Welsh in these central zones were assessed on property amounting to £1,524, 83.67 per cent of the Bristol Welsh's total assessed property. Here, the average Welsh property holding was £17.92. Within this central area, the streets immediately to the north of the Avon accommodated the most prominent Welsh community, with a large number of wealthy Welsh households. By the

eighteenth century, the quayside on the northern bank of the Avon below Bristol Bridge, known in the later Middle Ages as the Back, had acquired the name of 'Welsh Back', which it retains, and from the same century there is plentiful evidence of Welsh commercial activity and settlement in this area, including a Welsh market with its own market hall.<sup>36</sup> The association of the Back with the Welsh trade was already apparent in the fifteenth century; from the subsidy evidence it is clear that in the 1520s there was a thriving Welsh community in the area.<sup>37</sup>

In general, it seems that towns further from the Welsh border were less accessible to migrants with fewer resources, so that Worcester and Gloucester had, on the whole, smaller and wealthier groups of Welsh than Hereford and Shrewsbury, while Bristol came somewhere in between. The differing nature of the Welsh catchment areas of these towns probably also played its part in determining the contrasting character of their Welsh populations. As one would expect, within each town there was no single homogeneous Welsh community, just as there was no single English community. The Welsh, like their English counterparts, were split by socio-economic differences, and these could often be stark. More tellingly, while the Welsh were to be found at every level of urban society, they were proportionately less likely to be represented at the very upper reaches of civic life. Given the obscurity of the very poor, it is impossible to say if the Welsh were overrepresented at the bottom, but this is quite possible.<sup>38</sup> Certainly in Bristol, they seem to have constituted more than their fair share of Redcliffe and Temple's industrial proletariat. As Bristol and Shrewsbury demonstrate, the relative ubiquity of the Welsh in socio-economic terms is mirrored by their geographical distribution, but Bristol shows that in this dimension too there are discernible patterns. In the vicinity of the Back, in contrast to their compatriots labouring in the workshops across the river, a group of Welsh merchants had grown rich on Bristol's trade with south Wales and the Wye valley.

This discussion of the 1524/5 returns for these five towns can do nothing more than provide a framework for further research. The cultural flavour of the Welsh diaspora cannot be savoured through quantitative analysis alone, and neither can the attitudes towards the Welsh of their English neighbours. However, it is hoped that such work can help to contextualize the qualitative exploration of the experience of those of Welsh birth or descent living in English towns.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>G. Williams, 'The Welsh in Tudor England', in his *Religion, Language and Nationality in Wales* (Cardiff, 1979), pp. 171–99.

<sup>2</sup>R. A. Griffiths, 'Medieval Severnside: the Welsh connection', in R. A. Griffiths, R. R. Davies, I. G. Jones and K. O. Morgan (eds), *Welsh Society and Nationhood: Historical Essays Presented to Glanmor Williams* (Cardiff, 1984), pp.

70–89; R. A. Griffiths, ‘After Glyn Dŵr: an age of reconciliation?’, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 117 (2002), 139–64; idem, ‘Crossing the frontiers of the English realm in the fifteenth century’, in Huw Pryce and John Watts (eds), *Power and Identity in the Middle Ages: Essays in Memory of Rees Davies* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 211–25.

<sup>3</sup>W. P. Griffith, ‘Tudor prelude’ and Emrys Jones, ‘From medieval to renaissance city’, both in Emrys Jones (ed.), *The Welsh in London, 1500–2000* (Cardiff, 2001), pp. 8–34, 35–53.

<sup>4</sup>Peter Fleming, ‘Identity and belonging: Irish and Welsh in fifteenth-century Bristol’, in Linda Clark (ed.), *The Fifteenth Century, VII: Conflicts, Consequences and the Crown in the Later Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2007), pp. 175–93, is an exception.

<sup>5</sup>This paragraph is based on: Christopher Dyer and T. R. Slater, ‘The Midlands’, in David M. Palliser (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, Vol. I, 600–1540* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 609–38, at pp. 637–8; Christopher Dyer, ‘Small towns, 1270–1540’, in *ibid.*, pp. 505–37, at p. 522; R. A. Griffiths, ‘Wales and the Marches’, in *ibid.*, pp. 681–714, at p. 712; Nicholas M. Herbert (ed.), *The Victoria County History of Gloucestershire, Vol. 4: The City of Gloucester* (London, 1988), pp. 17, 23, 38–9, 44–5; R. A. Holt, ‘Gloucester: an English provincial town during the later Middle Ages’ (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 1987), *passim*; Alan D. Dyer, *The City of Worcester in the Sixteenth Century* (Leicester, 1973), *passim*; David R. Walker, ‘An urban community in the Welsh borderland: Shrewsbury in the fifteenth century’ (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Wales, Swansea, 1981), *passim*.

<sup>6</sup>Griffiths, ‘Wales and the Marches’, p. 696.

<sup>7</sup>This paragraph is based on the following editions of taxation returns edited by M. A. Faraday: *The Lay Subsidy for Shropshire, 1524–7* (Keele, 1999); *Worcestershire Taxes in the 1520s: The Military Survey and Forced Loans of 1522–3 and the Lay Subsidy of 1524–7* (Bristol, 2003); *Herefordshire Taxes in the Reign of Henry VIII* (2005); *The Bristol and Gloucestershire Lay Subsidy of 1523–1527* (Bristol, 2009). All figures are taken from these works. The 1523 grant of subsidy is also discussed in M. Jurkowski, C. L. Smith and D. Crook, *Lay Taxes in England and Wales, 1188–1688* (Kew, 1998), pp. 137–9.

<sup>8</sup>The following discussion of Welsh personal names is based on: T. J. Morgan and Prys Morgan, *Welsh Surnames* (Cardiff, 1994); T. E. Morris, ‘Welsh surnames in the border counties of Wales’, *Y Cymmrodor*, 43 (1932), 93–173; D. Elwyn Williams, ‘A short enquiry into the surnames of Glamorgan from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries’, *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1961–2), 45–87; Griffiths, ‘Crossing the frontiers’, p. 214. A similar methodology for identifying individuals of Welsh descent has been adopted by, *inter alia*, Faraday, *Bristol and Gloucestershire*, li–lii; idem, *Ludlow, 1085–1660: A Social, Economic and Political History* (Chichester, 1991), p. 137;

Griffiths, 'Tudor prelude', and Jones, 'From medieval to renaissance city', both in Jones (ed.), *The Welsh in London*, pp. 8–34, 35–53.

<sup>9</sup>Walker, 'Shrewsbury', p. 111.

<sup>10</sup>Faraday, *Bristol and Gloucestershire*, no. 4128.

<sup>11</sup>Sylvia Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London* (Ann Arbor, 1948), pp. 191–206.

<sup>12</sup>An example is Hugh ap Ieuan, admitted to Shrewsbury's Drapers' guild in 1504, whose father lived in Shropshire (Walker, 'Shrewsbury', p. 111).

<sup>13</sup>R. R. Davies, 'Colonial Wales', *Past and Present*, 65 (1974), 3–23.

<sup>14</sup>R. A. Griffiths (ed.), *Boroughs of Mediaeval Wales* (Cardiff, 1978), *passim*; idem, 'Urban colonization in England and Wales in the later Middle Ages: examples and implications', in Marc Boone and Peter Strabel (eds), *Shaping Urban Identity in Late Medieval Europe* (Leuven, 2000), pp. 221–35. See also J. Gwynfor Jones, 'Government and the Welsh community: the north-east borderland in the fifteenth century', in Harry Hearder and H. R. Loyn (eds), *British Government and Administration: Studies Presented to S. B. Chrimes* (Cardiff, 1974), pp. 55–86; G. J. Williams, 'The Welsh literary tradition', in J. F. Rees (ed.), *The Cardiff Region: A Survey* (Cardiff, 1960), pp. 181–6. S. Dimmock, 'Haverfordwest: an exemplar for the study of southern Welsh towns in the later Middle Ages', *Welsh History Review*, 22 (2004), 1–28; idem, 'Reassessing the towns of southern Wales in the later Middle Ages', *Urban History*, 32 (2005), 33–45.

<sup>15</sup>In the 1530s even Newport (Gwent), a few miles from the border, could be regarded as culturally Welsh by a Bristolian of Welsh descent (Fleming, 'Identity and belonging', p. 190).

<sup>16</sup>See, for example, Spencer Dimmock's contribution in Madge Dresser and Peter Fleming, *Bristol: Ethnic Minorities and the City, 1000–2001* (London, 2007), p. 36.

<sup>17</sup>A. D. M. Barrell, R. R. Davies, O. J. Padel and Ll. B. Smith, 'The Dyffryn Clwyd Court Roll Project, 1340–1352 and 1389–1399: a methodology and some preliminary findings', in Zvi Razi and R. M. Smith (eds), *Medieval Society and the Manor Court* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 260–97, at p. 278.

<sup>18</sup>Ll. B. Smith, 'The Welsh and English languages in late-medieval Wales', in D. A. Trotter (ed.), *Multilingualism in Later Medieval Britain* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 7–24; idem, 'A view from an ecclesiastical court: mobility and marriage in border society at the end of the Middle Ages', in R. R. Davies and G. H. Jenkins (eds), *From Medieval to Modern Wales: Historical Essays in Honour of Kenneth O. Morgan and Ralph A. Griffiths* (Cardiff, 2004), pp. 64–80.

<sup>19</sup>Alan Dyer, 'Ranking lists of English medieval towns', in Palliser (ed.), *Cambridge Urban History of Britain, Vol. I*, pp. 747–70, at p. 764.

<sup>20</sup>Faraday found a similar proportion of Welsh names in early sixteenth-

century Ludlow (Faraday, *Ludlow*, p. 142).

<sup>21</sup>On the basis of personal name evidence in coroners' inquests and similar records, Holt, 'Gloucester', p. 166, notes the existence of 'a large Welsh presence in the town' around 1400, but makes no attempt to quantify this.

<sup>22</sup>Ailsa Herbert, 'Herefordshire, 1413–61: some aspects of society and public order', in R. A. Griffiths (ed.), *Patronage, the Crown and the Provinces in Later Medieval England* (Gloucester, 1981), pp. 103–22, at pp. 109–11.

<sup>23</sup>In addition to Faraday's work, the Shrewsbury subsidy has been discussed in W. A. Champion, 'The Shrewsbury lay subsidy of 1525', *Shropshire Archaeological Society Transactions*, 64 (1983–4), 35–46.

<sup>24</sup>As Champion points out, guilds did not correspond neatly with actual occupational groups, since they could be composed of an amalgam of sometimes unrelated occupations ('Shrewsbury lay subsidy', p. 40), but for the purpose of identifying the relative wealth of guilds this is not significant.

<sup>25</sup>Walker, 'Shrewsbury', pp. 144, 147–8.

<sup>26</sup>D. H. Sacks, *The Widening Gate: Bristol and the Atlantic Economy, 1450–1700* (Berkeley, 1991), pp. 147–9, uses Tudor subsidy returns to analyse Bristol's socioeconomic topography, but at a less detailed level, dividing the town into only two zones for its analysis.

<sup>27</sup>This is broadly in line with the assessment made in 1696, where about one-fifth of the population had Welsh names: see Dresser and Fleming, *Bristol: Ethnic Minorities and the City, 1000–2001*, p. 59.

<sup>28</sup>Roger Leech, *The Topography of Medieval and Early Modern Bristol*, Bristol Record Society vol. 48 (1997), pp. 56–7, for William Appowell, merchant, holding a tenement of Witham Priory in Corn Street in the 1530s and 1540s.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 175–6, for tenements in Wine Street purchased by John Williams, butcher, in 1518 by Thomas Weston, clerk.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 30–1 for two tenements in Broad Street held by Margaret, widow of John Mathew, between 1522 and 1543.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 103–4, for tenements in St Mary le Port Street held or occupied by John Edwards, brewer, in 1500. David Lawrence was a feoffee of All Saints' church lands in Bristol in 1525 (Bristol Record Office (BRO), P.AS/D/HS/B/8).

<sup>32</sup>William Vaughan, gentleman, was involved in property deals in Bristol in 1523 and 1528 (BRO 12966/11a-b, F/Bond/3/8).

<sup>33</sup>Elizabeth Ralph (ed.), *The Great White Book of Bristol*, Bristol Record Society, vol. 32 (1979), pp. 117–19, describes Henry Kemys as a gentleman and steward of Bristol in 1518; see also BRO AC36074/19, P.A.S/D/BS/A/9 a, b., P. St P & J/D/6/f, for descriptions of Kemys as a Bristol gentleman, 1510–21.

<sup>34</sup>Faraday, *Bristol and Gloucestershire*, p. xlvii.

<sup>35</sup>Sacks, *Widening Gate*, p. 149.

<sup>36</sup>Dresser and Fleming, *Bristol: Ethnic Minorities and the City, 1000–2001*, pp. 60–3.

<sup>37</sup>In 1480, in his description of Bristol, William Worcestre remarked on ‘the road called the Back, where the Welsh ships come in’, and described how those trading with the south Wales coast ‘moor their ships at The Back on the rising tide, to unload and discharge their ships of their goods’. See Frances Neale, *William Worcestre: The Topography of Medieval Bristol*, Bristol Record Society, vol. 51 (Bristol, 2000), pp. 78–9, 146–7.

<sup>38</sup>In the 1580s, Worcester hosted large numbers of Welsh vagrants and labourers: see Dyer, *City of Worcester*, pp. 170–1, 182. For discussion of ‘subsistence’ migrants to later medieval Gloucester, see Holt, ‘Gloucester’, pp. 166–9.



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